

Language and Gender in Political Debates in the House of Commons

Volume I: Text

Sylvia Shaw
The Institute of Education
Doctor of Philosophy



Abstract

This thesis investigates the linguistic practices of politicians in one of the oldest and most powerful of all British institutions: the House of Commons. After the general election of 1997 record numbers of women were elected to parliament. This rapid increase in women's representation led to much speculation in politics and the media about how new women MPs would adapt to and change British politics. At the same time it is clear that men and women MPs are not treated equally. Women are marginalised by sexist barracking within the chamber and portrayed negatively by the media.

Theoretical and methodological insights gained from language and gender research are used to explore whether this inequality extends to the differential access to and use of linguistic resources by women and men in the debating chamber. The central questions of the thesis are: what factors contribute to a participant being more or less powerful in this context, and how salient is gender to the construction of that power? Viewing the debating chamber as a 'Community of Practice' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), and drawing upon the insights of MPs from interview data, I describe the interactional norms of the House of Commons as part of the ethnographic approach to this research. Using data from a 60-hour video corpus of House of Commons speech events I then undertake an analysis of floor apportionment in debates. I identify adversarial linguistic features in parliamentary question time sessions and examine their use by women and men. I also undertake an analysis of the functions and use of humour and irony in the debating chamber. Finally, a comparative study is undertaken with the Scottish Parliament. I describe the parliamentary procedures and historical development of the Scottish Parliament before analysing floor apportionment, the use of adversarial language, and humour and irony in this forum.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Deborah Cameron, for her constructive criticism and advice throughout the course of the thesis. Valuable practical help was given to me by Alan Smart of the Broadcasting Centre for the Scottish Parliament, for which I am very grateful. I would also like to thank friends, family and colleagues for their help and encouragement. Finally, many thanks to Rob Heard for editing the video data, and most importantly for his support through all the stages of this research.

Contents

Volume I: Text

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
Chapter One: Introduction	10
1.1. Aims and Main Questions	10
Chapter Two: Language, Gender and Politics: A Review of Research	15
2.1. Introduction	15
2.2. Language, Gender and Power	15
2.2.1. General overview	15
2.2.2. The co-operative/competitive dichotomy	29
2.2.3. Language and gender in public contexts and the workplace	32
2.2.4. Women, language and institutional change	39
2.3. Gender and Politics	47
2.3.1. Introduction	47
2.3.2. The recruitment and representation of women in politics	48
2.3.3. Women as a minority group in politics	51
2.3.4. Gender and participation in political speech events	55
Chapter Three: Method	60
3.1. Introduction	60
3.2. General Methodological Aims and Issues	61
3.3. Ethnography and the 'Ethnography of Speaking'	62
3.4. Discourse Analysis	66
3.4.1. Conversation Analysis (CA)	66
3.4.2. Discourse and the identification of adversarial and gendered linguistic practices	68
3.5. Data Collection and Transcription	70
3.5.1. Collecting and transcribing the language of the debating chamber	70
3.5.2. Collecting and transcribing interview data	76
Chapter Four: The House of Commons in Context	85
4.1. Introduction	85
4.2. An Overview of Political Speech Events	85
4.2.1. The characteristics and functions of speech events in political assemblies.	85
4.2.2. Adversarial and consensual political styles	88
4.3. An Ethnographic Description of Speech Events in the House of Commons using Hymes' (1972a) SPEAKING Grid	91
4.3.1. Introduction	91
4.3.2. Situation	91
4.3.3. Participants	95
4.3.4. Ends	97
4.3.5. Act Sequence	98
4.3.6. Key	102
4.3.7. Norms on interaction and interpretation	102

4.3.7.1. Norms of interaction: formal rules	103
4.3.7.2. Norms of interaction: Informal rules	107
4.3.7.3. Norms of interpretation	108
4.3.8. Genre	109
4.3.9. Different types of House of Commons speech events	109
Chapter Five: Floor Apportionment in Debates	113
5.1. Introduction	113
5.2. Floor Apportionment, Turn-taking and Interruption as a Marker of Dominance	114
5.2.1. Power in debates	114
5.2.2. Floor apportionment, turn-taking and interruption	117
5.3. The Debate Floor	119
5.4. Legal Interventions in Debates: Giving Way	125
5.4.1. Requesting a speaker to give way	125
5.4.2. Refusing to comply with a request to give way	128
5.4.3. The number of ‘legal’ turns taken by male and female MPs in all speech events in the full data corpus	130
5.5. Illegal Interventions in Debates	133
5.5.1. Collective shows of support and disapproval	133
5.5.2. Illegal interventions by individual MPs	135
5.5.2.1. Barracking	141
5.6. The Speaker’s Interventions in Debates	144
5.7. Conclusions	151
Chapter Six: The Use of Adversarial Linguistic Features in Parliamentary Question Time Sessions	156
6.1. Introduction	156
6.2. Linguistic Features that may Constitute an Adversarial Style in the House of Commons	158
6.2.1. Questions and responses	158
6.2.2. Pronominal use	161
6.2.3. Imperative forms and directives	162
6.2.4. The relation of previous research to parliamentary speech events	162
6.3. Identifying Adversarial Features in PMQT Exchanges	164
6.3.1. Questions, responses and the adversarial style	169
6.3.2. The use of contrasts and the adversarial style	173
6.3.3. Description of opponents and the adversarial style	175
6.4. Variation in the Use of Adversarial Features in Question Times	176
6.5. The Use of Adversarial Linguistic Features in Question Times	185
6.5.1. Introduction	185
6.5.2. The number of adversarial questions asked by MPs	186
6.5.3. Adversarial questions in Question Time sessions	191
6.5.4. The frequency of adversarial features in MPs’ adversarial questions	196
6.5.5. The form of questions	198
6.5.6. Responses to questions	201
6.6. Conclusions	203

Chapter Seven: Humour and Irony in the House of Commons	208
7.1. Introduction	208
7.2. Humour in Political Speech Events	208
7.3. Sexual and Sexist Humour	219
7.4. Filibustering	224
7.5. Conclusions	233
 Chapter Eight: Gender and Language in the Scottish Parliament: a comparison with the House of Commons	236
8.1. Introduction	236
8.2. A Description of the Scottish Parliament	237
8.2.1. The history and development of the Scottish Parliament	237
8.2.2. The composition of the parliament	240
8.2.3. Parliamentary rules and procedures	242
8.3. Floor Apportionment in the Scottish Parliament	244
8.3.1. Introduction	244
8.3.2. The frequency of participation of male and female MSPs in all speech events in the Scottish Parliament	245
8.3.3. Legal interventions in debates	248
8.3.3.1. Requesting a speaker to give way	248
8.3.3.2. Refusing to comply with a request to give way	249
8.3.4. Illegal interventions in debates	251
8.3.5. The Presiding Officer's interventions in debates	257
8.4. The Use of Adversarial Linguistic Features in Scottish Parliament Question Times	259
8.4.1. Introduction	259
8.4.2. The number of questions asked by male and female MSPs	260
8.4.3. Adversarial questions and responses in Scottish Parliament question time sessions	262
8.5. Humour and Irony in Scottish Parliament Speech Events	269
8.6. Conclusions	275
 Chapter Nine: Conclusions	279
9.1. Overview and Main Findings	279
9.2. Explanations of Gender Differences in the House of Commons	281
9.3. Women, Men and Co-operative and Competitive Speech Styles	283
9.4. Gender and Language in Public Contexts and the Workplace	284
9.5. Women, Language and Institutional Change	286
9.6. The Relationship of the Thesis to Women in Politics	289
 Bibliography	291
 Appendices	311
Appendix One	311
Appendix Two	312
Interview A	324
Interview B	329
Interview C	335
Interview D	

	Interview E	347
	Interview F	357
Appendix Three		361
Appendix Four		364
Appendix Five		365

Figures

Figure 1: Extract from the Hansard report	71
Figure 2: Summary of video and interview data	72
Figure 3: Transcription Conventions	82
Figure 4: The layout of the House of Commons debating chamber	93
Figure 5: The turn-taking choices of an MP when requested to give way	125
Figure 6: The assertions, question and responses to one of Hague's turns	171
Figure 7: The way in which adversarial features were recorded	192
Figure 8: The number of adversarial and non-adversarial questions asked by male and female MPs in PMQT and DQT sessions	195
Figure 9: The layout of the Scottish Parliament debating chamber	240

Transcripts

Transcript 1: Jane Griffiths' question to the Prime Minister	72,121
Transcript 2: Giving way	126
Transcript 3: An illegal intervention that does not gain a response from other MPs	136
Transcript 4: An illegal intervention that gains a response (debate 4)	137
Transcript 5: An illegal intervention that gains a response (debate 3)	137
Transcript 6: Legal and illegal interventions (debate 1)	148
Transcript 7: Sustained legal and illegal interventions (debate 3)	139
Transcript 8: An intervention by the Speaker (debate 3)	146
Transcript 9: An intervention by the Speaker (debate 4)	147
Transcript 10: An intervention by the Speaker (debate 1)	148
Transcript 11: Sustained interventions by the Speaker (debate 4)	149
Transcript 12: Exchange between William Hague and Tony Blair	165
Transcript 13: Second exchange between William Hague and Tony Blair Blair	167
Transcript 14: Exchange between John Redwood and Margaret Beckett	177
Transcript 15: Question from Caroline Flint to the Prime Minister	178
Transcript 16: Exchange between Alan Williams and Margaret Beckett	180
Transcript 17: Exchange between Jacqui Smith and Margaret Beckett	181
Transcript 18: Exchange between Charles Kennedy and the Prime Minister	182
Transcript 19: Exchange between Colin Breed and Margaret Beckett	183
Transcript 20: Trade and Industry Questions (1) (02/04/98)	210
Transcript 21: Trade and Industry Questions (2) (02/04/98)	211
Transcript 22: Trade and Industry Questions (3) (02/04/98)	212
Transcript 23: Amendments to crime and Disorder Bill (22/06/98)	213
Transcript 24: Prime Minister's Question Time (01/07/98)	216
Transcript 25: The third Reading of the Finance Bill (1) (01/07/98)	219
Transcript 26: Debate on Further Education (06/07/98)	220
Transcript 27: Health Department Questions (02/06/98)	221

Transcript 28: Defence Questions (06/04/98)	222
Transcript 29: Private Member's Bill: Fireworks Bill (03/07/98)	225
Transcript 30: The third reading of the Finance Bill (2) (01/07/98)	230
Transcript 31: The third Reading of the Finance Bill (3) (1/07/98)	230
Transcript 32: The third reading of the Finance Bill (4) (01/07/98)	231
Transcript 33: Sustained illegal interventions	254
Transcript 34: An example of an adversarial question in FMQT	264
Transcript 35: Executive Question time session (07/12/00)	269
Transcript 36: Health Debate (14/12/00)	271
Transcript 37: Poindings and Warrant Sales Debate (06/12/00)	272
Transcript 38: First Minister's Question Time (07/12/00)	273

Tables

Table 1: Give way interventions in five debates	128
Table 2: The number of male and female (legal) turns in the whole corpus	131
Table 3: The number of male and female turns in all debates	131
Table 4: The number of male and female turns in all PMQT sessions	132
Table 5: The number of male and female turns in all Departmental Question Time sessions	132
Table 6: Illegal interventions in debates	136
Table 7: The number of interventions made by the Speaker and the number of illegal interventions made by MPs in five debates	145
Table 8: The number and function of Speakers' interventions in five debates	145
Table 9: The number of questions asked by male and female MPs showing their parliamentary status and political party	186
Table 10: Numbers of male and female MPs in each political party	187
Table 11: The Number of questions asked by male and female MPs in Prime Minister's Question Time Sessions showing their parliamentary status and political party	189
Table 12: Number of questions asked by male and female MPs in Departmental Question Time Sessions showing their parliamentary status and political party	190
Table 13: The amount of adversarial questions asked by male and female MPs according to their political party and status	193
Table 14: The amount of non-adversarial questions asked by male and female MPs according to their political party and status	194
Table 15: Adversarial features in questions asked by male MPs	197
Table 16: Adversarial features in questions asked by female MPs	198
Table 17: Question forms used by male and female MPs in PMQT and DQT sessions	199
Table 18: Adversarial and non-adversarial responses in DQT sessions	202
Table 19: Numbers of male and female MSPs in each political party	241
Table 20: Number of male and female (legal) turns in the whole corpus	245
Table 21: The number of male and female turns in FMQT sessions	246
Table 22: The number of male and female turns in EQT sessions	246
Table 23: The number of male and female turns in debates	247
Table 24: The percentage of legal turns taken by male and female MPs in different speech events in the Scottish parliament and the House of Commons	247

Table 25: Giving way in three debates	248
Table 26: Individual illegal interventions in three debates	253
Table 27: The number of interventions made by the P.O. and the number of illegal interventions made by MSPs in three debates	257
Table 28: The number and functions of the Speakers' and Presiding Officers' interventions in all debates	258
Table 29: The number of Scottish Parliament questions asked by male and female MSPs according to party membership and parliamentary status	261
Table 30: Adversarial questions in all Question Time Sessions	263
Table 31: The form of FMQT and EQT questions	266
Table 32: Senior and junior Ministers' responses to questions in EQT sessions	268

Volume II: Illustrative Material

Part A: A Sample of Extracts of Video Recordings

House of Commons

- Extract 1: Jane Griffiths' question to the Prime Minister (Transcript 1)
 - Extract 2: Legal and Illegal interventions in debates (Transcripts 2 and 7)
 - Extract 3: An intervention by the Speaker (Transcript 8)
 - Extract 4: An intervention by the Speaker (Transcripts 10 and 26)
 - Extract 5: Sustained interventions by the Speaker (Transcript 11)
 - Extract 6: Exchange between William Hague and Tony Blair (Transcript 12)
 - Extract 7: Second exchange between William Hague and Tony Blair (Transcript 13)
 - Extract 8: John Redwood and Margaret Beckett (Transcript 14)
 - Extract 9: Caroline Flint and the Prime Minister (Transcript 15)
 - Extract 10: Charles Kennedy and the Prime Minister (Transcript 18)
 - Extract 11: Colin Breed and Margaret Beckett (Transcript 19)
 - Extract 12: Ian McCartney's jokes (Transcripts 20 and 21)
 - Extract 13: Nick Palmer's joke (Transcript 25)
 - Extract 14: David Maclean's filibuster (Transcript 29)
- #### Scottish Parliament
- Extract 15: Sustained illegal interventions (Transcript 33)
 - Extract 16: An adversarial question in FMQT (Transcript 34)
 - Extract 17: Executive question time exchange (Transcript 35)
 - Extract 18: Pantomime joke (Transcript 36)
 - Extract 19: Dorothy Grace-Elder's joke (Transcript 37)
 - Extract 20: Margo MacDonald's question to the First Minister (Transcript 38)

Part B: A Sample of Audio Recording of Interview Data

- Recording 1: Interview with Jane Griffiths (See Appendix 2, Interview C, p.329)

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Aims and Main Questions

In this thesis I aim to investigate the linguistic practices of politicians and their relationship to gender in one of the oldest and most traditional of all British Institutions: the House of Commons. The general election of 1997 was remarkable both for the landslide Labour victory (the Labour party won 418 of 659 seats), and for the record numbers of women elected to parliament. The percentage of women in parliament rose from 9.2 % (60 MPs) in 1992 to 18.2% (120 MPs) in the 1997 election¹. The election victory heralded a new political stance on issues such as devolution for Scotland, Ireland and Wales (which subsequently occurred in 1999)². Furthermore, the rapid increase in the representation of women MPs led to much speculation in politics and the media about how the new women MPs would adapt to parliamentary life and also how they would change British politics. The fact that prior to the 1997 general election women's representation in parliament had never risen above 9.2% means that the electoral term of the period between May 1997 and May 2001 with its 18% representation of women provides an opportunity to investigate the complex workings of gender, language and power within a traditional parliamentary institution at a time of compositional change.

My interest in this subject lies in a desire to investigate the particular constraints and obstacles that women in public roles must overcome in order to participate fully in professional life. Many of the women MPs interviewed in the process of writing this thesis express a 'terror' of speaking within the House of Commons debating chamber. This sentiment is probably shared by many male MPs, especially those who are more recently elected. However unlike men, women are marginalised by sexist barracking within the chamber and by media representations which highlight their physical appearance over their professional abilities. There are many overt indications that in this context women and men are not treated equally: male MPs in the debating chamber make 'melon weighing' gestures (intended to represent a woman's breasts) while a woman MP makes a speech; the media characterise the new intake of women MPs as 'Blair's

babes’; and women are assigned to stereotypical ‘women’s’ portfolios and topics in debates such as health and social care. I am interested in drawing upon the theoretical and methodological insights gained from gender and language research to explore whether this inequality extends to the differential access to and use of linguistic resources by women and men.

The House of Commons is a particularly apt context for a feminist linguistic analysis. It is among the most powerful of all British institutions and represents a public focus for democratic political life. Whilst many political decisions are undoubtedly made outside the debating chamber, this forum is the place where MPs vote and publicly demonstrate their status and political allegiances. It is also a context in which women continue to be vastly under-represented, especially when compared with other parliamentary assemblies in Europe (for example the representation of women in Norway’s parliament is 39%³). It is surprising therefore (and possibly a testament to the authority wielded by such an institution) that the rules, working practices and arcane traditions that govern interaction in the House of Commons remain largely unexplored by linguists and gender and language researchers⁴.

It has been claimed that ‘institutions are organised to define, demonstrate and enforce the legitimacy and authority of linguistic strategies used by one gender – or men of one class or ethnic group – whilst denying the power of others’ (Gal 1991: 188). Given that the House of Commons was an exclusively male forum for centuries and that it is only in the latter stages of the twentieth century that female representation has increased significantly, it is likely that men from the dominant ethnic and class groups in Britain will be the most powerful participants, and that men and women are therefore participating on unequal terms. The central question that I ask in this thesis is: In this context, what factors contribute to a participant being more or less powerful in the debating chamber, and how salient is gender in the construction of that power? In order to investigate this central question I ask: what are the linguistic and interactional practices of powerful and powerless speech in the House of Commons, and are these linguistic practices gendered?

The questions outlined above are relevant to three main inter-linked areas in gender and language research: Firstly, many researchers have claimed that women are more likely to use a co-operative style of speech and men a competitive style (Coates 1986; Holmes 1995), and men have been shown to use fewer strategies associated with politeness than women in informal speech (Deuchar 1988, Holmes 1995). While these types of claims can be criticised for over-generalising about male and female linguistic differences, it is a common folklinguistic belief and a perception amongst some politicians themselves that women adopt a more consensual style and men a more competitive, aggressive style in the debating chamber.

Secondly, this thesis links to a growing body of research into the language used by women and men in the workplace and in public life. This includes research into how men and women interact in groups at work (Case 1985, 1988; Edelsky 1981, 1993), and how men and women enact authority at work (McElhinny 1995, 1998; West 1990). Recently research has been undertaken more specifically into women, men and public speaking. Judith Baxter (1999a, 1999b) investigates why girls (relative to boys) experience difficulties when they are required to speak in formal, public or unfamiliar contexts. Baxter suggests that an 'effective' public voice need not 'connote the normative, male voice of public authority, confidence and success' (1999a: 95). Rather it should imply the ability to draw upon a range of discursive positions according to the context; regardless of whether they were culturally coded masculine or feminine.

Thirdly this thesis will contribute to debates about the ways in which women may bring about change as their representation increases in a traditionally male dominated institution. This connects to the areas described above, because one reason that women are sometimes expected to bring about change in institutions is that they are thought to contribute a distinctive, consensual or less confrontational style than men. However, other research has suggested that women may simply adopt or assimilate to the dominant male discursive norms of the institution, whilst the 'critical mass' theory (Kanter 1977) claims that it is only when the proportion of women exceeds a certain percentage that women will make an impact on public institutions. Clare Walsh (2000, 2001) investigates

whether women uncritically accept pre-existing discursive practices in institutional contexts that have been previously monopolised by men (such as parliament and the Church of England), whether they seek to change them, or whether they shift between these two positions. She finds that the presence of women in these institutions challenges dominant discursive practices, but that in some cases this can lead to the 'defensive strengthening of fraternal networks' among men (2000: 301). In assessing the extent to which certain powerful linguistic practices are used differentially by male and female MPs, this research will also attempt to address the question of the changes that may be brought about by the participation of women in traditionally male-dominated institutions.

The subject of the changes that women may bring to political institutions is not only pertinent to gender and language research but will also contribute to political studies, and in particular the study of women in politics. This area of research within politics is led by feminist critics of British politics who, like some feminist linguists, argue that 'organisations and structures institutionalise the predominance of particular masculinities, thereby empowering and or advantaging certain men over almost all women and men' (Lovenduski 1996: 5). Since the general election of May 1997 there has been much comment by politicians, political researchers and journalists alike about the changes that may arise as a result of increased numbers of women MPs. While it seems to follow that the presence of more female MPs will raise the profile of what are seen as 'women's issues' such as childcare and reproductive health (Norris 1996: 92), the other changes that are identified by political research as occurring as a result of more women in parliament are extremely vague. It is often suggested in both political research and the media that female politicians bring a 'different voice' and a 'different style' (Childs 2000) to the political arena. However, although such research claims that it is 'the perception of MPs (..) that women employ a distinctly feminised language and style in political debates' (Childs 2000: 67) a more detailed sociolinguistic framework is necessary to fully investigate these claims. As there is no existing sociolinguistic research into the language used by MPs in the House of Commons this thesis represents an original contribution in both sociolinguistics and political studies.

The following chapter reviews language and gender research and research on gender and politics in the areas described above. Chapter Three discusses methodological issues regarding the collection and analysis of linguistic data from the House of Commons. An ethnographic description of the House of Commons is undertaken in Chapter Four in order to contextualise the analysis of floor apportionment in Chapter Five; the identification of an adversarial style in Chapter Six; and the analysis of MPs' use of humour and irony in Chapter Seven. Finally, a comparative study of linguistic practices in the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament is undertaken in Chapter Eight.

Notes

¹ The first woman was elected to parliament in 1918. In the nineteen general elections between 1918 and 1992 the number of women in parliament ranged from between two and 41. See Appendix 1, p.311 for details.

² New assemblies were created in Scotland, Ireland and Wales in 1999. Chapter 7 includes a comparative analysis of the Scottish Parliament and the House of Commons.

³ Source: Nordic Council of Ministers. *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries: Facts and Figures 1994*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Nord. Vol. 3. p.34.

⁴ This is with the notable exception of the linguistic research of Stef Slembrouk (1992) who investigated the written construction of spoken discourse in the Hansard 'verbatim' report. This is discussed in Chapter Four of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Language, Gender and Politics: A review of research

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to situate the thesis within the main theoretical debates in gender and language research and to review research already undertaken in this field. Section 2.2. gives a general overview of relevant theoretical debates before reviewing language and gender research relevant to the three areas identified in the introductory chapter: co-operative and competitive speech styles; language and gender in public contexts and the workplace; and language, gender and institutional change. Section 2.3. undertakes a review of political research on gender and politics, which includes a discussion of research on the representation of women in politics; women as a minority group within politics; and the participation of women politicians in political speech events.

2.2. Language, Gender and Power

2.2.1. General overview

In order to situate this thesis within theoretical debates about the inter-relationship of gender, language and power this section reviews four main phases in the study of language and gender. These are firstly, the deficit model characterised by the work of Robin Lakoff (1975) in which a distinct ‘women’s language’ (consisting of linguistic features thought to express ‘tentativeness’) is identified as being relatively powerless in comparison to men’s language; the dominance approach (Fishman 1978; Spender 1980) in which gender differences are interpreted in terms of men’s power and women’s subordination in society; and the cultural difference approach (Maltz and Borker 1982; Tannen 1990) where men and women are viewed as belonging to different subcultures and so develop different but equally valued communication styles. Finally, critical rethinking in the field has led to a number of more recent approaches that can be described as ‘anti-essentialist’ because speakers are thought to constantly renegotiate their identities within multiple and competing discursive practices. These include social constructionist perspectives; those which focus upon the

performative nature of gender (Butler 1990); and those which focus upon how people 'do' gender as a routine accomplishment in talk (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Robin Lakoff's 'Language and Woman's Place' (1975) was one of the first works in language and gender studies which stated that it was the social role of women and the social pressure for them to 'talk like a lady' which was responsible for differences in language use between women and men. Prior to this publication sex difference research typically characterised women's language as inferior to the 'standard' or 'normal' speech of men (for example Jespersen 1922). Lakoff claimed that women are socialised from childhood to adopt a gendered way of speaking which, because of their subordinate position in society, contains linguistic features (such as question tags, hedges, and polite forms) thought to convey their tentativeness and insecurity. Lakoff's identification of a 'women's language' has been criticised on a number of grounds. Firstly, Lakoff identified the features of women's language through introspection and unsystematic observations of white middle-class U.S. women. Whilst introspection can be viewed as a necessary starting point for research it is inadequate to support claims that particular features of language use are typical of an entire group in society. Lakoff claims that 'women's language' is typical of 'all women' yet only observes a small sub-group. Additionally, Lakoff's hypotheses about women's speech (for instance that women use more question tags than men) have been tested by researchers and the results have been contradictory (Crosby and Nyquist 1977; Dubois and Crouch 1975).

The work of Robin Lakoff is classified within the 'deficit' approach because she judges women's language to be a deficient and ineffective style inferior to that of men (Uchida 1992: 549). Lakoff characterises men's language as 'neutral' and approves of women switching to this neutral style (1975: 7). Here Lakoff adopts an androcentric viewpoint where women's behaviour is seen as problematic in comparison to men's behaviour, and the possible limitations of stereotypically male behaviour are not considered. Although Lakoff's work has been criticised both for its lack of empirical method and for the androcentric or deficit position that she occupies it is responsible for initiating research which sought to test its

claims empirically. Lakoff states in *Language and Woman's Place* that she was not aiming to provide a definitive account of language and sexism, but rather to provide a 'goad to further research' (1975: 5). Her work certainly succeeded in this aim as researchers began to count sex differences in tag questions, qualifiers and the other linguistic features claimed by Lakoff to be characteristic of women's language. Much of this research was conducted with 'a naïve faith in the infallibility of quantitative methods for revealing the truth about communication' (Crawford 1995: 6), and the findings were often contradictory (as mentioned above in relation to empirical research into question tags).

During the time that Lakoff was undertaking this research, other researchers used a 'dominance' model to attempt to account for sex differences in language. This research is underpinned by the idea that men's more powerful position in society is realised at the micro-level of interaction through the use of particular linguistic features. Examples of research within the dominance approach include the work of Candace West and Don Zimmerman (West 1984; Zimmerman and West 1975) on interruptions and floor apportionment. In this research a linguistic feature (in this case interruption) is viewed as a powerful strategy used mainly by male speakers in mixed-sex conversational interaction. Whilst the conception of gender within the dominance approach lacked complexity in that it is only viewed in relation to power, it reflected a point in gender and language research which was 'a moment of feminist outrage, of bearing witness to oppression in all aspects of women's lives' (Cameron 1996: 41). One of the main criticisms levelled at the dominance approach was that much research using this model portrayed women as powerless victims in the face of male oppression, when in fact the characteristics associated with women's speech can be seen to exemplify successful and skilful communicative strategies (Coates 1994: 73). In response to this, researchers became concerned with re-assessing women's language in a positive way and looking for the interactional and communicative strengths of women's language, particularly in all-female interaction. The dominance approach provides a useful explanatory framework for gender differences in mixed-sex interaction but the concepts of dominance and oppression are not as pertinent for single-sex interaction. The development of the cultural difference framework arose as feminist thinking grew away from the 'outrage' of

dominance towards 'a moment of feminist celebration, reclaiming and revaluing women's distinctive traditions' (Cameron 1996: 41).

The cultural difference approach to gender and language studies was first put forward by anthropologists Maltz and Borker (1982). The approach they proposed is based upon Gumperz's (1982b) framework for studying problems in interethnic communication. This states that members of different cultures have their own rules and assumptions about communication, which they bring to intercultural encounters. As different cultures have different communicative rules this gives rise to miscommunication between the two groups. Maltz and Borker claim that the same type of miscommunication arises in interactions between men and women. They argue that boys and girls are mainly socialised in same-sex peer groups and that they learn to use language in different ways. This means that when men and women interact as adults they are working with different sets of rules and assumptions about communication, and miscommunication can arise as a result.

The cultural difference approach was popularised in Deborah Tannen's books *That is not what I meant!* (1986) and *You just don't understand* (1990). Tannen adopted Maltz and Borker's approach to explain miscommunication between women and men and took the further step of suggesting that these problems could be overcome if people attempted to understand each other's sub-cultural norms. The immense popularity of these publications and the appeal of the cultural difference approach was in part due to the conceptualisation of a 'different but equal' explanation of linguistic differences between women and men. Partly in response to the androcentrism of research adopting the deficit position, the cultural difference model views men's and women's language as equally valid and as arising purely out of cultural socialisation processes rather than recognising that power relations are constitutive of gender relations (Cameron 1998a: 438). Tannen's research and the cultural difference approach prompted much criticism of this apolitical stance (Freed 1992; Troemel-Ploetz 1991; Uchida 1992) as it was seen as undermining earlier work carried out within the dominance framework. Viewing miscommunication as misunderstandings that

were 'no-one's fault' (Uchida 1992: 562) failed to acknowledge the power relationships between women and men.

Further criticisms held that Tannen had misrepresented work such as that undertaken by Marjorie Goodwin (1980) and Maltz and Borker (1982) within the cultural difference approach:

Whereas Tannen underscores the differences in the way girls and boys construct social realities through words, Goodwin stresses the importance of the similarities between the girls and boys whom she studies. Tannen's emphasis on difference despite the author's insistence on similarity constitutes a genuine distortion. (Freed 1992: 147)

Many of these criticisms are concerned with the simplification and overgeneralization within Tannen's (1990) work which is partly contingent on the populist genre of the publication itself. However, wider debates about the relationship between difference and dominance approaches have continued. The dominance approach has been criticised for the a priori designation of particular linguistic features as being 'powerful' or 'powerless' (Tannen 1994). Tannen argues that these features are multi-functional and some features (such as interruption) can be used to express solidarity or support for a speaker. Deborah Cameron states that 'the dominance vs difference debate has exposed weaknesses on *both* sides' (1998a: 438) and that:

The critique of 'difference' approaches focuses mainly upon their political shortcomings, whereas the critique of 'dominance' approaches focus more on problems of analytic procedure. In consequence the two camps have tended to talk past one another. (1998a: 438)

Cameron responds to Tannen's criticisms by pointing out that the multifunctionality of linguistic features has been acknowledged in gender and language research. For example the research of Cameron et. al (1989) found that in some contexts question tags were markers of powerful speech, rather than a marker of tentative speech as Lakoff suggests. Cameron also points out that Tannen's notion of relativity would render discourse analysis and indeed conversation impossible:

It is one thing to say that we cannot specify in advance and in general 'what interruptions mean' or 'what silence means' it is another to suggest we cannot specify the function of some particular interruption/silence in some particular piece of data. (1998a: 439)

One of the main critiques of the difference approach is that 'cultural difference alone cannot adequately explain that full pattern of language difference and miscommunication' (Henley and Kramarae 1991: 27). Uchida (1992) suggests that a more adequate explanation must move away from the strict dichotomy imposed by the opposition of dominance and difference models. She argues that the concepts of gender, power and (sub) culture are intertwined and that:

To talk about gender is to talk about women and men as composing sociocultural groups, and the main force that constructs these two groups as different is the difference in the position they are placed within the social hierarchy (...). Difference and dominance should be seen as simultaneously composing the construct of gender. (1992: 563)

Deficit, dominance and difference approaches have been criticised because they tend to over-simplify the construct of gender. Thorne, Kramarae and Henley (1983) view the correlation of linguistic features with the sex of speakers as a first stage of gender and language research:

We invented notions like 'genderlect' to provide overall characterisations of sex differences in speech. The 'genderlect' portrayal now seems too abstract and overdrawn, implying that there are differences in the basic codes used by women and men, rather than variably occurring differences, and similarities....genderlect implies more homogeneity among women, and among men – and more difference between the sexes than is, in fact, the case. (1983: 14)

Crawford (1995) states that this early stage of gender and language research 'can now be transcended by research that is sensitive to gender in the context of setting, roles, and other social identities such as age, class and ethnicity' (1995: 46).

Cameron (1996) also calls for a more sophisticated conceptualisation of gender within sociolinguistics because of the difficulty of accommodating an account of

relationships between individuals that is based on 'actively produced and context-dependent social relations'. This is evident in deficit and difference approaches:

Both the deficit and difference models have at their centre the idea of individuals who speak as they do because of who they are (i.e. have been socialised to be), and not because of the way they are positioned in interaction with others in various contexts. (1996: 41)

The fourth phase in gender and language research attempts to address the limitations imposed by static and essentialist conceptions of gender. Rather than being expressed by a single approach to gender and language a number of strands can be identified which are influenced primarily by the postmodern/poststructuralist thinking which questions the nature of reality, of subjectivity and knowledge. A second impetus for this fourth phase is the emergence of calls to re-think the nature of gender and language research and to move away from the gender polarization brought about by focusing on gender differences (Bergvall 1996: 24).

This phase of gender and language research can therefore be characterised as 'anti-essentialist'. Anti-essentialist researchers draw upon a range of theoretical positions, including the general move in social science away from socio-structural realism (and an interest in the effects of static models of social structure upon individuals) towards social theories which focus on social action as a process by which social meaning is achieved. Social constructionism (Shotter and Gergen 1994) is an anti-essentialist approach which views discourse as the central organising principle of social process. Various approaches from different disciplines have been characterised as 'constructionist' (Potter 1996: 127), including ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967) and discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherall 1987).

Social constructionists hold that language is a culturally constructed 'system of meaning' (Crawford 1995: 12) which is activated by social interaction. This approach critiques the essentialism of research into sex differences which view gender as an integral part of an individual and 'portray gender in terms of fundamental attributes which are conceived as internal, persistent, and generally

separate from the on-going experience of interaction with the daily socio-political contexts of one's life' (Bohan 1993: 7).

Furthermore, Susan Gal (1992) suggests that concepts such as 'women's language' are 'ideological-symbolic constructs' which are constitutive of an individual's identity. Categories such as 'women's speech' and men's speech' as well as other categories such as 'feminine' and 'masculine' are 'culturally constructed within social groups: they change through history and are systematically related to other areas of cultural discourse such as the nature of persons, of power, and of a desirable moral order' (1992: 154).

In these terms, gender is not only expressed in the language use of women or men, but also constituted through their actions in interaction. Anti-essentialists who draw upon ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967) and its development in Conversation Analysis (CA) (for example in the work of Sacks 1992), also share the notion that gender is something that one 'does' rather than an essential trait which resides in an individual. Ethnomethodology is a theory of praxis which tries to avoid the interpretation of interaction based upon a priori social and contextual assumptions. Instead, CA studies aim to interpret interaction according to the aspects of the social context that speakers themselves make relevant in their talk. In this way, CA analyses attempt to ensure that local practices are only interpreted in relation to social categories (such as gender, or institutional identities) when speakers orientate themselves towards such categories¹. Discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherall 1987) is closely allied to ethnomethodology in that it shares the view that socio-political categories are made relevant by speakers in the on-going shared construction of talk. Furthermore, discursive psychology also emphasises 'an alternative theorisation of cognition' (Potter and Edwards 2001: 90) where 'instead of considering 'cognition' as a collection of more or less technical inner entities and processes the focus is on how mental phenomena are both constructed and oriented in people's practices (2001: 90). Discursive psychology therefore extends the ethnomethodological notion of 'orientation to action' by speakers into descriptions of cognitive states (such as 'jealous' or 'angry') and 'mentalistic

terms that people have available to them for doing action: persuading, justifying, accounting, flirting and so on' (Potter and Edwards 2001: 90).

Other anti-essentialist researchers draw upon Judith Butler's (1990) formulation of gender as 'performative'. This shares with social constructionism the idea that gender is constituted by the acts carried out by an individual. Butler proposes that sex is not a foundation for gender but is discursively produced by the social relations of gender (Cameron 1997a: 29). Butler sees gender as 'the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a 'natural' kind of being' (1990: 33). However, this position collapses the distinction between the terms sex (as biologically determined) and gender (as socially constructed) which has been a theoretically useful distinction for feminists seeking to investigate the symbolic and hierarchical marking of sexual difference in society. In common with the social constructionists, performativity places emphasis upon the agency of individuals in the enactment of their social identity. Some feminist linguists have seen this approach as problematic because this greater degree of agency implies 'a degree of freedom that denies the materiality of gender and power relations' and the 'institutional contexts and the power relations within which gender is being enacted' (Cameron 1997a: 30). Furthermore, Butler's emphasis upon the agency of individuals has also been criticised because it limits an approach in which social identities and power relations are co-constructed within linguistic interaction: 'that we are not just individual atoms disporting ourselves in a vacuum is particularly evident when the matter under investigation is language, a kind of performance which is inevitably intersubjective' (Cameron 1997a: 31).

The ethnomethodological approach also recognises that 'doing gender' is a performative act. In this case gender can be constructed by 'doing' everyday activities and also by the unequal power relations between the sexes and the normativeness of male dominance. This concept of 'doing gender' stresses both the creative potential of an individual's actions and the embedding of gender-typical behaviour in a social context. As Aki Uchida states (1992: 464):

regardless of our own intentions the consequences of our behaviour must always be seen in the context of society that defines gender. In the U.S. society's system (as well as many others) part of being female consists of being the dominated, weaker sex. And the difference between women and men is constructed as a fact to reinforce the construction of gender, meaning that the appropriate doing of gender means the reproduction of 'the institutional arrangements based on sex category' (West and Zimmerman 1987: 146).

This thesis attempts to avoid the static and essentialising notions of gender which characterise the deficit, dominance and difference approaches. The model adopted by West and Zimmerman above is useful because it does not conceive of gender in a way that sees gendered linguistic behaviour as following on from 'natural' traits residing in an individual, but suggests rather that individuals 'do gender' in socially situated interactions. I agree with Walsh (2000) who states that gender can be viewed as both a flexible and fixed category. The flexibility is arrived at by the idea that gender 'does not simply reflect a pre-existing identity, but helps constitute, maintain and transform that identity in everyday situations via talk' (2000: 22). However, this flexibility is always constrained by the 'institutional arrangements based on sex category' mentioned above. Similarly Walsh also cites Dorothy Smith (1990) as a researcher who recognises the institutional constraints that operate on women's identities and argues that 'there is a constant tension between women's freedom to make choices and the regulatory practices which function to limit these choices and determine how they are perceived' (Walsh 2000: 24). This means that women 'actively work out their subject positions and roles in the processes of negotiating discursive constraints' (Smith 1990: 86 cited in Walsh 2000: 24).

I adopt a view of the use of language in speech and writing (discourse) as a form of social practice. Conceptualising discourse in this way acknowledges that issues of gender, power and ideology are all linked through the particular contexts in which the discourse occurs:

Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation, institution and social structure that frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That discourse is socially constituted, as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social

identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. (Wodak 1996: 17)

Differences in the House of Commons between women's and men's use of language are seen in this thesis as being shaped (but not determined) by the context of male dominance and female subordination (Henley and Kramarae 1991). One of the difficulties in studying the operation of this power is that 'male dominance has become naturalized by the institutions of power' (Kotthoff and Wodak 1997: 4) and is not necessarily expressed through overt dominant behaviour. Like Gal (1992) I view power as both an economy, realised at the micro-political level of interaction (Henley 1977), and as operating upon ideological and institutional levels in which the 'strongest form of power' is 'the ability to define social reality, to impose visions on the world' (Gal 1992: 160). As Henley and Kramarae state:

Hierarchies determine whose version of the communication situation will prevail; whose speech style will be normal; who will be required to learn the communication style, and interpret the meaning of the other; whose language style will be seen as deviant, irrational, and inferior; and who will be required to imitate the other's style in order to fit the society. Yet the situation of sex difference is not totally parallel: sex status intercuts and sometimes contrasts with other statuses; and no other two groups are so closely interwoven as women and men. (1991: 19-20)

It is therefore only possible to conceive of 'the whole woman' (Eckert 1989) when gender is not abstracted from other aspects of identity, because gender is related to and affected by social identities such as social class, race, ethnicity and regional aspects. Eckert states that 'because gender differences involve differences in orientation to other social categories, the effects of gender can show up in differences within sex groupings' (1989: 245). The complexity inherent in the interaction between gender and other social variables has created the need of a model which is not just 'additive' and which doesn't just 'add class/ethnicity and stir' (Cameron 1997a: 33).

In this thesis I use Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992) development of Wenger's (1998) model of 'Communities of Practice' (CoP) in order to address

the problem of the abstraction of gender from other aspects of social identity; the linguistic system from linguistic practice; and language from social action and the communities in which they occur (1992: 90). According to this construct, individuals belong to multiple, changing CoPs upon different terms of participation, and gender is seen as one of the factors that may affect an individual's membership of and participation within any given Community. The differential terms of participation within a community include the differential linguistic practices of its members. The decision to locate this research in one particular CoP is also an attempt to undertake a locally focussed investigation in which generalizations about essentialist categories of male and female behaviour are avoided, and differences within as well as across these categories taken into account (Cameron 1997a: 36).

Wenger (1998) identifies three crucial elements to a CoP. These are firstly that they have mutual engagement, secondly that they are a joint negotiated enterprise and thirdly that they have a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time. Thinking critically about the application of the CoP model to the House of Commons (or rather the members of the community and the practices in which they engage) it seems clear that the criterion of mutual engagement and the shared repertoire of resources are satisfied. Members of Parliament (MPs) come together and are 'mutually engaged' in the debating chamber, and they clearly have a shared repertoire of linguistic and other resources (including formal address terms; interrupting each other; sitting down and standing up at appropriate times and gesturing in order to be able to intervene). However, as Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) note, what constitutes a 'joint enterprise' needs to be specified more precisely. As long as the criterion of a joint negotiated enterprise does not assume the shared goals of its members but allows for conflictual relationships and goals as part of the 'complex relationships of mutual accountability that become part of the practice of the Community' (1999: 175), then this criterion is also satisfied in the House of Commons CoP. This is because whilst the mutual engagement of a debate or Question Time is clear, the joint enterprise of 'having a debate' is complicated when for example one group of MPs (also belonging to other CoPs associated with party membership) are trying to pass some legislation and another group is blocking the process by 'talking

out' the debate. How far can these two groups be said to be undertaking a joint enterprise when they have completely conflicting goals (trying to have a debate and trying not to have a debate respectively)? The only way this can be resolved is by viewing these conflicting goals at the level of linguistic practices that make up the shared repertoire of resources, but this is still slightly unsatisfactory as it leaves the criterion of 'joint negotiated enterprise' unfulfilled unless it is viewed as being more or less the same as the 'mutual engagement' criterion.

Clare Walsh (2000) also observes that there is an implicit consensual element in the conception of CoPs. This is in relation to the claim that the degree to which an individual's membership of the community is 'peripheral or 'core' depends upon 'how successfully an individual has acquired the shared repertoire, or assimilated the goal(s) of a joint enterprise' (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999: 176). As Walsh points out, the notion of peripheral and core membership is useful because it allows for the differences between women (and between men) within the CoP (2000: 4). However, this does seem to imply that some sort of consensus is necessary in order to be a 'successful' core member. Furthermore, in a male-dominated CoP such as the House of Commons it may be that female MPs' acquisition of the 'shared repertoire' can never be fully 'successful' (or is at least limited) because of what Bergvall (1999) describes as 'the force of the socially ascribed nature of gender: the assumptions and expectations of (often binary) ascribed social roles against which any performance of gender is constructed, accommodated to or resisted' (1999: 281). In other words female MPs in this CoP are 'doing gender' within the limitations of the binary gender roles and strong social stereotypes ascribed to them.

Penelope Eckert (1998) suggests that in prestigious and elite professions men have greater legitimacy whereas women are seen as 'interlopers' and 'are at greater pains to prove that they belong' (1998: 67). This means that women pay more attention to 'proving worthiness' through 'meticulous attention to symbolic capital' (1998: 67) in order to establish their membership within a group. Eckert claims that the finding that women use more phonological prestige forms than men can also be related to their attention to symbolic capital. Women's use of standard linguistic forms could be a way of putting themselves 'beyond reproach'

in a CoP in which they are positioned as interlopers. In her study of CoPs in a U.S. high school Eckert finds that girls use more non-standard linguistic forms in the CoPs where non-standard forms are valued, and more standard forms in CoPs where standard forms are valued. This suggests that the girls are 'putting these phonological resources to better use than the boys' (1998: 73). As the actions and roles that define and claim membership of these CoPs are only available to boys, the girls are forced to use different symbolic resources (including language) in order to 'prove their worthiness' and claim membership within a CoP.

According to Bergvall there are three aspects to gender which she summarises as 'what is inborn, what is achieved and what is thrust upon us' (1999: 282). She claims that a 'localized' CoP approach cannot account for 'systematic gender norms established prior to the local practice of gender, and the more global level of ideology and hegemony'. As this study takes a feminist approach it assumes unequal power relations between women and men as a governing principle of social relations at an ideological level (which is particularly apparent in male-dominated institutions). It is therefore assumed that the restriction of women's access to, acquisition and use of these linguistic practices are manifestations of these unequal power relations. This does however leave open the question of the extent to which an individual's participation in particular practices is a volitional process, and how much it is imposed or ascribed. This can be partly addressed by considering the nature of the 'gendered space' that has been said to exist in male-dominated CoPs, which is discussed further in section 2.2.3. below.

Locating this research in one particular Community of Practice makes it possible to pay particular attention to the linguistic and other norms within the community in order to facilitate the interpretation of the linguistic practices of its members. As well as taking a discourse analytic approach to the interpretation of spoken language data, I also draw on the descriptive framework of the Ethnography of Speaking (Hymes 1972a) in order to describe different elements of the context systematically. Ethnographic and feminist methodological approaches are also reflected in the research methodology which attempts to interpret the spoken language with a degree of reflexivity through the incorporation of interview data from some of the members of the Community of Practice. This not only benefits

the research by gaining valuable insights from MPs who have experience of speaking within the House of Commons, but it also shifts the interpretative focus from the researcher towards members or 'insiders' within the Community of Practice (see Chapter Three, section 3.5.2., p.76).

Having outlined four phases of language and gender research, and discussed the main theoretical issues that they raise, the rest of this section considers the three inter-linked areas of language and gender research identified in Chapter One as being relevant to this thesis. These are: the claim that women use a co-operative style of speech, and men a competitive style of speech; research on language and gender in public contexts; and a discussion of women, language and institutional change. Finally, I review research on gender and politics relating to the recruitment, representation and participation of politicians in political assemblies.

2.2.2. The co-operative/competitive dichotomy.

A common finding in gender and language research is that women's speech contains linguistic features that are co-operative, and men's speech contains linguistic features that are competitive (Coates 1986, 1989; Holmes 1995). According to some researchers this means that 'women's collaborative, supportive style leads to their being dominated in mixed groups and unfavourably evaluated in public domains such as law and politics where a more masculine, adversarial style is valued' (Coates 1989: 195). As this research is being conducted in just such an adversarial public domain, it is important to critically consider the evidence for this dichotomy as it could have a bearing upon linguistic behaviour of male and female MPs.

Empirical evidence for the existence of women's co-operative speech style is put forward by Holmes (1995: 130) whose research 'supports a view of women's conversational style as more interpersonal, affective and interaction-orientated compared to the impersonal and content-orientated style more typical of male interaction'. Holmes's evidence for women's use of a co-operative style includes their use of encouraging verbal feedback (minimal responses and backchannels), the introduction of topics aimed at maintaining talk, and their use of 'other

oriented' pragmatic particles and speech acts (such as complimenting and apologising) (1995: 193). Conversely, Holmes finds that men 'are more concerned with the referential functions of talk than with its affective functions' (1995: 193), they give fewer compliments and apologies than women, and use encouraging feedback less than women.

Many researchers (Coates 1991, 1993, 1996; Holmes 1992, 1995; Jones 1980; Tannen 1984, 1986) agree that there are female and male speech styles and that there are positive aspects of the women's style (as it is facilitative, personal and consensual) which have traditionally been viewed negatively because of the subordination of women in society. However, Marjorie Harness-Goodwin's (1990) research on the face-to-face interaction and social organisation of children's friendship groups shows that girls 'can hold their own in arguments with boys', and that 'co-operation and competition are not mutually exclusive agendas and often coexist within the same speech activities' (1990: 284). Goodwin finds that girls and boys have in common 'not only a similar social space but also procedures for carrying out conversational events', and suggests that similarities in face-to-face interactions between the gender groups are more common than previous 'difference' studies would suggest.

Deborah Cameron (1997b, 1998b) also finds that the co-operative/competitive dichotomy is problematic. In her study of all-male conversational interaction she shows that it is possible to interpret the same features of a conversation as either competitive or co-operative. She criticises the co-operative/competitive dichotomy, arguing that the dichotomy itself is inadequate because all conversations must include both co-operative elements (Grice 1975), and competitive elements (for example to gain the floor and the approval and attention of others) (1998b: 279). Like Goodwin (1990), Cameron finds that the co-operative/competitive dichotomy leads to an over-simplification of the complexities of conversational interaction where

Co-operation might refer to agreement on the aims of talk, respect for other speakers' rights or support for their contributions; but there is not always perfect co-occurrence among these aspects, and the presence of one of them need not rule out a 'competitive' element. (1998b: 279)

In particular, discussions of women's talk have suggested that paying attention to other participants' face in conversations shows that they are oriented towards seeking connection but not towards seeking status, however

attending to others' face and attending to one's own are not mutually exclusive here. The egalitarian norms of women's friendship groups are, like all norms, to some degree coercive: the rewards and punishments precisely concern one's status within the group (among women, however, this status is called 'popularity' rather than 'dominance'). (Cameron 1998b: 280)

The co-operative/competitive dichotomy can therefore cause women's and men's speech to be interpreted exclusively in relation to this polarisation. Furthermore, gender stereotyping may play a role in this process, as Cameron observes: 'the behaviour of men and women, whatever its substance may happen to be in any specific instance, is invariably read through a more general discourse on gender difference itself' (1998b: 271). Similarly, Crawford (1995) claims that stereotypical beliefs held by researchers of linguistic sex differences may well be responsible for the way in which their results are interpreted: 'The template provided by speech stereotypes has led to what might be called empiricist revisionism, in which results counter to received beliefs about women's speech are reinterpreted to fit' (1995: 30). The belief that women are co-operative speakers and men competitive speakers is a certainly a folklinguistic stereotype (Cameron 1992: 52), so it is important that this thesis does not simply replicate this belief and recognises the effects this stereotyping may have both upon the research process and the participants themselves.

There is evidence to suggest that academic research into male and female speech styles is assimilated into wider cultural practices and beliefs. (Cameron 1992; Crawford 1995). In particular, there is evidence to suggest that the stereotype of women having a co-operative speech style and men having a competitive style is widely held. If women MPs in the House of Commons believe that women have a consensual style and men an adversarial style, then this could have a bearing on their confidence about speaking in an adversarial forum; their language use within it; and their treatment by other participants. Sarah Childs (2000) states that

her analysis of the recruitment and representation of women MPs in the 1997 parliament:

Points to notions of acceptable and unacceptable, legitimate and illegitimate forms of language style appropriate to politics. In these oppositions, the former are associated with male language, modes of interaction and men MPs, and the latter with women's language, modes of interaction and women MPs. (2000: 69)

Childs' research incorporated interviews with 24 women Labour MPs. She found that 16 of the women thought that women MPs had a distinctive style or distinctive language. The women she interviewed pointed to 'new ways of operating: less aggression and more co-operation, teamwork, inclusiveness, consultation and a willingness to listen' (Childs 2000: 68). In my own interviews I found that women MPs were often reluctant to characterise a women's style, but that women's language was nevertheless described as being 'less hectoring' but 'equally forceful'. One MP comments:

One of the good things about women and debating is that we all listen to each other and we're all constructive, but actually when you have that sort of debate I didn't enjoy it. (Appendix 2, Interview B, lines 38-40)

There is therefore some evidence to suggest the stereotype of male and female competitive and consensual styles is common amongst MPs. However, for the reasons outlined above, a straightforward notion of a co-operative/competitive dichotomy cannot be assumed (Cameron 1998b; Goodwin 1990). The identification of women's co-operative and men's competitive speech styles is pertinent to the following two sections: language and gender in public contexts; and the ways in which women are thought adapt to and change public institutions.

2.2.3. Gender and Language in public contexts and the workplace.

This section reviews research carried out into gender and language in public contexts and the workplace. Like Coates, (1989: 195, cited in the previous section), Janet Holmes takes as her starting point for an investigation into women's talk in public contexts that 'male talk has been characterised as

typically competitive, argumentative and verbally aggressive' and that women's talk 'can be described as co-operative, facilitative and other-oriented' (1992: 131). Unlike conversation, speech in public contexts is typically formal, is often oriented towards achieving a particular task and formally constrained by hierarchical and institutional procedures and conventions. Holmes (1992) claims that in these public contexts it is the talk strategies associated with male speakers (such as challenging utterances, assertive disagreements and disruptive utterances) that serve the purpose of asserting power or status, and that women 'seem less comfortable in such status-oriented contexts' (1992: 134).

There is some evidence to suggest that men tend to participate more fully than women in public contexts by speaking for longer, taking more turns and interrupting others. Eakins and Eakins (1976) found that in University faculty meetings men spoke more frequently than women, and took longer turns. Edelsky's (1981) research into faculty meetings found that there were few interruptions but that men spoke for longer than women. Susan S. Case (1988) investigated conversational interaction between men and women managers in small groups at management school and found that male managers interrupted more than their female colleagues. Case also found that male managers used linguistic strategies associated with display such as joking, swearing, and talking about competition and aggression. In research on televised political debates Edelsky and Adams (1990) and Adams (1992) found that men violated turn-taking and pre-allocated topic constraints more than women, and that when a rule was broken the women complied with interventions by the moderator more rapidly than the men. Lyn Kathlene's (1994, 1995) research into floor apportionment in 12 U.S. state legislative committee hearings found that male participants spoke for longer and took more turns than women, and that men made and received more interruptions than women committee members. Although it is difficult to generalise about such results because these studies were carried out in different contexts and researchers used different ways of classifying features such as interruption (James and Clarke 1992), the literature suggests that men in some public contexts occupy the floor more than women, and use features associated with dominance (such as interruption) more than their female colleagues.

One of the reasons adduced to explain why men tend to participate more fully in public contexts is that the interactional norms in the workplace are male interactional norms (Coates 1994; Gal 1991; Tannen 1997). Lakoff (1990: 210) suggests that the norms of men's discourse styles are institutionalised and that they are seen as 'not only the better way to talk but the only way'. Historically public and private spheres became more demarcated at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a time at which 'gender division changed: men were firmly placed in the newly defined public world of business, commerce and politics; women were placed in the private world of home and family' (Hall 1985: 12). One consequence of this gendered public/private divide is that institutional activities in the public domain have been established by men (Coates 1994: 73). The idea that particular settings and activities can be the domain of some groups and not others is also expressed in Bourdieu's notion of linguistic habitus (1977, 1991, 1999) which he describes as a 'linguistic sense of place' that

governs the degree of constraint which a given field will bring to bear on the production of discourse, imposing silence or a hyper-controlled language on some people while allowing others the liberties of a language that is securely established. (1999: 508)

In support of the idea of 'gendered spaces' Freed's (1996) investigation into linguistic features in men and women's speech in an experimental setting found that there were few differences between the conversational language used by her male and female participants. One of her explanations for this finding is that in establishing the experimental setting she 'inadvertently created an experimental space which is symbolic of what our society views as a 'female space'' (1996: 66). She claims that this female space could have caused the participants to speak in a way that is typically (and stereotypically) associated with the activity of women speaking in private and that 'in our culture, this activity and the language style associated with it may be conventionally connected to women simply because women have participated in this sort of activity more frequently than men' (1996: 67).

Freed goes on to suggest that the setting and communicative tasks together become an index (Ochs 1992) of a gendered style and that 'certain social

activities and practices may themselves become symbolically gendered if they are regularly and consistently associated with women or men' (Freed 1996: 67). This establishes a link between the extent to which certain activities are practised by men or women and the degree to which they are gendered. Therefore, it follows that male-dominated public institutions and workplaces are likely to be 'male spaces' in the same way that Freed's private experimental context was a female space.

As Tannen (1997: 86) points out, much of the research into gender and language in the workplace 'takes as its starting point that workplace norms are masculine norms' and is motivated by a desire to investigate the links between gender, language and power. The ways in which women and men enact professional authority in traditionally male dominated professions is one such area. Doctor-patient interaction is an example of asymmetrical discourse in which doctors have more interactional power than their patients. Apart from the research of West (1984) and Woods (1989), which show that gender is more salient than status in these mixed-sex professional contexts, further research shows that women and men have different ways of enacting authority in asymmetrical discourse. West's (1990) research analysed directive-response sequences in doctor-patient interaction. She found that women's commands were frequently mitigated and therefore reduced the status differences between the doctor and patient. For example, she found that women doctors frequently made directives in the form of proposals for joint action as in 'Okay! Well let's make that our plan'. However, men's commands tended to reinforce status differences by the use of aggravated directives such as 'lie down!'. Similarly, Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992) found that women doctors often negotiated topic shifts with patients by using reciprocal topic shifts and thus reducing status differences. Men doctors tended to shift topics without negotiation or agreement and therefore emphasised the status differential between the patient and themselves. These studies suggest that although discursive rights and obligations are linked to the status of participants, gender also plays an important part in the way in which these rights and obligations are played out. The effectiveness of the minimizing of status roles between women doctors and patients has been noted by West (1990) who found that mitigating directives instigated compliant responses from patients, and as

women doctors used these polite forms more than men doctors their interviews showed a greater degree of compliance overall.

The enactment of authority by women and men in other public and professional contexts is discussed in the work of Bonnie McElhinny (1998) who investigated the ways in which women police officers adopt and adapt to the institution's masculine norms. This research is pertinent to the consideration of how the increased participation of women in male dominated professions may change these institutions, and is therefore discussed more fully in the following section, as is gender and language research concerning the perception and evaluation of men and women according to their verbal behaviour in public contexts (Carli 1990; Crawford 1988).

As the review above shows, research on gender and language in the workplace encompasses many different types of interaction and settings, including one-to-one interviews between doctors and patients, telephone calls (McElhinny 1998), and formal and informal meetings. These studies of professional interaction can be drawn upon to inform this thesis, but it is also necessary to consider public speaking and more specifically parliamentary public speaking as a particular type of speech genre that is highly formal and operates under particular institutional and interactional hierarchies and constraints. The institutional structures, procedures and rules imposed upon speakers in the House of Commons are therefore described fully in Chapter Four of the thesis in order to contextualize the subsequent linguistic analysis (in Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

Public speaking is the subject of Judith Baxter's (1999a, 1999b) research in which she investigates 'why it is that many girls (relative to boys) experience difficulties when they are required to speak in formal, public or unfamiliar contexts' (1999: 81). In her research into the ways in which teenage girls and boys behave in the public context of group discussions and presentations in the classroom she finds that:

Girls find it more difficult than boys to speak effectively in public contexts and this is largely due to the powerless ways in which they are positioned

in the classroom (and the world) by the discourse of gender differentiation. This discourse continues to carry restrictive and often stereotyped definitions of teenage femininity, despite well-documented advances in female academic and professional achievements, and the rise in the media of so-called 'girl-power'. (1999b: 232)

Baxter's research finds that dominant speakers in the classroom can be identified by linguistic features such as the number of speaking turns that they take and the length of these turns. Furthermore, she identifies three conditions or actions which constitute individuals as dominant speakers. These are rule-breaking; use of the support-group (or sidekick); and the use of humour. Dominant speakers, especially boys, made unsolicited contributions and were prepared to interrupt others or divert the attention of the audience away from another speaker. One boy 'hisses, boos, heckles and slow hand claps' as a girl speaks, thus breaking the rules of the classroom. The girl does not contribute to the discussion again, and the boy obtains a speaking turn. The dominant speakers were also supported by one other member of the class (the side-kick) or by a group of classmates (the support group). Baxter reports that these individuals and groups performed a number of supportive functions for the dominant speaker including providing vocal agreement, minimal responses; non-verbal agreement such as head-nodding and eye-contact and by challenging or blocking other speakers who might attempt to interrupt (1999b: 219). Dominant speakers also used humour to support their leadership position by entertaining their audience and 'crowd-pleasing' in order to deflect attention away from other speakers.

Baxter's research data consisted of both single and mixed sex interaction. Whilst dominant speakers were identifiable in both single-sex groups, all the examples of dominant speakers in the mixed-sex group were boys. However, she holds that it is 'reactionary and essentialist' to claim that 'females are somehow constituted by and therefore constrained by a particular 'style' of speech' (1999b: 232). She gives examples of boys behaving co-operatively and girls behaving competitively in the single-sex groups as evidence that boys and girls do not always conform to gendered linguistic styles. She also finds that girls behaved more confidently in the more informal group interactions, but did not display this behaviour in the more public contexts of pair presentations and whole class discussions. The main

reason she gives for the lack of girls' confidence in the more public contexts is that:

One of the most powerful ways in which the discourse of gender differentiation constructs teenage female identity within the classroom setting is in terms of its expectation that girls should abide by 'the rules' and conform to the codes of classroom conduct, whereas boys are not necessarily expected to do so. Furthermore, girls receive few if any 'Brownie points' for good behaviour and may be penalised if they misbehave, whereas boys may be paradoxically rewarded for transgressing the rules, such as when they are awarded speaking turns when they call out. (1999b: 233)

As there are no rewards for girls' rule-breaking and dominant behaviour in interaction where speaking turns are contested, there is no incentive for girls to behave dominantly and risk being perceived as 'bad girls'. Also, when faced with the problems of interruption or failing to secure the teacher's attention and gain a speaking turn the girls tended to opt out of the discussion altogether which leads Baxter to conclude:

If girls (..) tend to opt out of pursuing their speaking turns in this way, they must surely lose confidence about the value of what they have to say, about their ability to sustain a contribution in a mixed-sex setting, and to 'run the gauntlet' of seizing and maintaining a speaking turn within multiple conversations. Instead they will regard it as 'natural' that girls are quieter and more reticent, whereas boys are louder and more garrulous (1999b: 235).

Conversely Baxter suggests that it is perceived as 'natural' for boys to contest authority as part of dominant constructions of masculinity.

Baxter's research involves teenagers rather than adults, and is conducted in a classroom setting which even at its most formal is much less regulated and restrictive (in terms of the opportunity speakers have to gain speaking turns) than formal parliamentary debates. However, as one of the few investigations into public speaking in the field of gender and language research it provides useful insights for this thesis. Baxter's description of the 'hisses, boos, heckles and slow hand claps' (1999b: 232) which marked the dominant behaviour of one boy in the mixed-sex interaction bears a strong resemblance to the barracking and name-calling associated with interaction in the House of Commons. Furthermore, the

fact that Baxter finds that 'there are significant differences between male and female ways of speaking in public contexts, that are being actively negotiated, constructed and reinforced on a day-to-day basis in the classroom setting through the discourse of gender differentiation' (1999b: 236) indicates that gender may also be a significant factor in other public speaking forums such as the House of Commons.

Clare Walsh's (2000, 2001) research on women's participation in a number of Communities of Practice in the public sphere seeks to investigate 'whether women uncritically accept pre-existing discursive practices, whether they contest and seek to change them, or whether they shift strategically between these two positions, depending upon what is perceived to be appropriate at any given time' (2001: 1). Walsh also takes as her starting point that certain spaces, settings and domains may be gendered as either primarily masculine or feminine (Freed 1996) and that 'through habitual use, these masculinist discursive norms have assumed the status of gender-neutral *professional* norms' which means that 'women's public rhetoric is likely to be fractured by competing, often contradictory, norms and expectations'. This has an impact both upon how women are perceived and also upon the roles they are given within the public sphere (2000: 1). Walsh uses in-depth structured interviews with women in Parliament and the Church of England, as well as members of women's groups such as the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and the Women's Environmental Network, and refers to texts from a variety of media in order to describe what she terms the 'metadiscursive gap' between how gender is practised by individual women and the stereotypical standards by which their linguistic behaviour is judged (2000: 2). As Walsh's central thesis concerns whether women in the public sphere are expected to 'civilise' male-gendered spaces it will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.2.4. Women, language and institutional change

The research reviewed above suggests that women and men are likely to behave differently in public contexts, and this is evidenced in their language use. Most of this research shows that women are disadvantaged because they do not participate

as fully as men in public and professional settings. This section considers the ways in which women may adapt to (or reject) the 'masculine norms' thought to be prevalent in public institutions; the ways in which women are perceived when they attempt to adapt to those norms (or refuse to do so); and finally the ways in which the increased numbers of women in public life may change public institutions themselves.

Bonnie McElhinny's (1998) research on the linguistic behaviour of male and female police officers in Pittsburgh found that women police officers adopt behaviours 'that are normatively or frequently understood to be masculine' (1998: 322) such as non-involvement or emotional distance. She finds that male and female police officers have the same linguistic style when taking reports, which prevents interaction from becoming too personal. The police officers have a strong collective identity in which these linguistic strategies are seen as 'the way we do our job' with an 'it's us versus them' mentality. McElhinny sees that the adoption of masculine norms by women is a necessary process of change in historically male-dominated professions:

It seems clear that who we think can do certain jobs changes more rapidly than expectations about how these jobs should be done. The process by which women enter a masculine workplace necessarily includes some adoption, as well as adaptation of institutional norms. The interesting question is not whether women adapt, but how. (1998: 322)

McElhinny also claims that women police officers are redefining notions of masculinity and femininity in order to think of police work as not incompatible with their own felt gender identities (1998: 323). For example, McElhinny finds that one form of adaptation is the emotional distance or 'economy of affect' demanded by interactions with the public and expectations of other police officers. Women police officers report smiling less, and adopting a 'gruffer and tougher' style which is realised through their use of language (1998: 313).

One of the problems faced by women entering numerically male dominated professions is that expectations for how individuals in authority should speak are similar to expectations of how men should speak and interact (Tannen 1997: 91).

Wendy Webster's (1990) analysis of Margaret Thatcher's communicative style suggests that Thatcher exploited the conflict of gendered stereotypes, adopting both authoritarian and domestic personas. Thatcher adopted qualities 'which had always been associated with masculinity, and escaped scorn' (Webster 1990: 88). As an individual she was an extremely successful politician, however she did little to change the culture of politics for women MPs because she promoted and strengthened negative stereotypes of women as wives and mothers (Webster 1990: 98)².

The adoption of male ways of expressing authority may also entail the adoption of the sexist and authoritarian attitudes that underlie them. Carol Cohn (1989) conducted feminist research into the behaviour and attitudes of members of a defence policy think tank. However, in learning the language that they used she found that 'it was a short step from speaking the experts' language to understanding – and even sharing their point of view' and she found it hard to 'hold onto the vision that had impelled her to go to the institute in the first place' (Cameron 1992: 223).

Women's accommodation to authoritative male discourse practices can also lead them to be perceived negatively by others. Linda Carli (1990) investigated how college students perceived men and women who gave a persuasive speech, first in an assertive manner and then tentatively. She found that women were perceived as being more knowledgeable when they spoke assertively than when they spoke tentatively, but that they influenced men less and were less well-liked by women when they spoke assertively. Men were perceived as being knowledgeable and likeable whether they spoke in an assertive or tentative style. Crawford (1988) also found that when women spoke assertively they were perceived as being less likeable than men who spoke in the same way. This type of research suggests that women may have to choose between being assertive and being likeable and feminine (Tannen 1997: 92). This problem is commonly conceived as being a 'double bind' between being professional and being feminine:

When a woman is placed in a position in which being assertive and forceful is necessary, she is faced with a paradox; she can be a good

woman but a bad executive and professional, or vice versa. To do both is impossible. (Lakoff 1990: 206)

An alternative to the adoption of masculine norms of interaction by women is the promotion of the co-operative and consensual styles of speech thought to be favoured by many professional women. Co-operative styles used in some contexts have been shown to produce positive effects. For example Coates (1994: 83) cites Senta Troemel-Ploetz's (1985) comparison of male and female TV interviewers which shows that the interactive strategies used by women interviewers promote more open and equal discussions in interviews. Holmes (1992) finds that women tend to contribute more in informal professional contexts than formal ones, and that when they do contribute they often facilitate 'exploratory talk'. Holmes shows how exploratory talk assists a more extensive exploration of the issue being discussed than the more status-enhancing talk typically produced by men in formal contexts. Holmes proposes a number of interactional strategies for women that are intended to increase their participation in public contexts and suggests that men as well as women would benefit from the adoption of more consensual, exploratory talk (1992: 146).

Clare Walsh (2001: 6) suggests that the value placed upon co-operative discourse strategies by some feminists may 'have contributed to the creation of a gendered split *within* the public sphere, by reinforcing the prevailing view, including among women themselves that they are naturally suited to relatively low-status roles'. Walsh also cites MacMahon's (1998) review of Holmes' work which claims that the promotion of women-oriented norms in occupational roles may lead to a 'Stepford Wives scenario in which women direct all their attention into being as blandly pleasant as possible' (2001: 6). This is indeed the exact characterisation of new Labour women politicians by the media and identified by MPs interviewed for this research (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 400-412). Walsh also notes that there is 'a perception of blandness which has been fuelled by largely hostile media coverage' (2001: 6). The characterisation of women MPs as 'Stepford Wives' does not only relate to their perceived blandness however, but perhaps more importantly to their perceived inability to think for themselves, and the fact that they are seen as being controlled by male Labour party leaders.

Walsh (2000, 2001) finds that women have contributed to the increasing 'conversationalization' (Fairclough 1992, 1995) of the public sphere 'whereby interpersonally-orientated discursive practices are displacing purely transactional ones' (2001: 6). She finds that women's groups (such as the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and the Women's Environmental Network) prefer the consensual discourse styles often associated with women's discursive norms, and that this has been instrumental in the success of such groups (most notably the political representation gained by members of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition in the Northern Ireland assembly). She concludes that the increased numbers of women in public sphere roles has at least 'called into question the unproblematic status of the implicitly masculinist belief systems, values and discursive practices that predominate in these domains' (2000: 273) and that:

even a small number of women can make an impact upon dominant discursive norms, if they pursue a 'critical difference' approach, whereas the voices of larger numbers of women can be assimilated, if they choose to adopt a policy of accommodation to pre-existing norms and practice (2000: 273).

However, as Holmes (1992: 144) states 'there is no obvious incentive for adult males to give up highly valued talking time in public contexts'. Indeed, Walsh notes that increasing numbers of women in some institutions can serve to 'strengthen fraternal networks' (2000: 301) among men. This phenomenon has also been described by Yoder (1991) as the 'intrusiveness effect' whereby highly masculinized occupations become more, not less, resistant to rapidly increasing numbers of women. The ability of women to change institutions will depend upon a complex combination of factors including the commitment and organisation of women themselves to promote change as well as the strength of the fraternal networks that seek to oppose them. Furthermore, in contexts such as the House of Commons which are highly masculinized, and where interaction is fundamentally adversarial, it is questionable whether there is scope for the incorporation of more consensual or co-operative styles. Change and the success of different interactional styles must therefore be predicated upon a complex interaction of conditions. As Cameron (2000) notes in relation to the teaching of communication skills:

The emphasis placed by so many communication experts on negotiation, conflict resolution, co-operation and agreement suggests that they are teaching communication skills for a world in which people's relationships are basically egalitarian, their intentions towards each other are basically good and their interests are basically shared. If those conditions are fulfilled, co-operation may well be rational and rewarding. If they are not fulfilled, however, the norm of co-operation is likely, in practice, to favour the more powerful party. (2000: 164)

It is possible that an interactional style that is co-operative and consensual used in the highly adversarial House of Commons may only serve to give others an interactional advantage, and may lead to the speaker being perceived as weak or ineffectual.

A factor commonly thought to affect the ability of women to change institutions is the number of women present in a particular institution. Some political researchers have claimed that through numerical gains the negative effects of tokenism, which serve to marginalise women in an institution, will fade. It has been proposed that once the numbers of women reach a 'critical mass' in institutions (thought to be approximately 30% representation) fundamental changes would be possible (Kanter 1977; Carroll 1985). The concept of 'critical mass' is borrowed from nuclear physics and refers to the quantity of a substance needed to start a chain reaction which is an irreversible change to a new state (Dahlerup 1988: 275). By analogy it is thought that a qualitative shift will take place when women reach a proportion of about 30% in an institution. This idea is highly influential and some women politicians interviewed for this thesis used the term 'critical mass' in relation to their perception of women's ability to effect change in the House of Commons³. However, it has been shown that simply increasing women's presence in the workplace to combat the negative effects of tokenism and bring about gender equality ignores the pervasive sexism in society (Yoder 1991). Yoder shows that studies of tokenism have found that token men do not experience the same negative consequences as token women and that it is sexism, rather than group size which produces inequalities (Kathlene 1994: 561). Dahlerup (1988) suggests a critical mass of women is not as influential in the process of change as the 'critical acts' which those women undertake. The most significant factor in changing the position of a minority is the 'willingness and

ability of the minority to mobilise the resources of the organisation or institution to improve the situation for themselves and the whole minority group' (1988: 296) rather than their numerical representation.

Women MPs in the House of Commons interviewed for this and other research (McDougall 1998, Childs 2000) have expressed diverse views upon the desire and ability of women to change political institutions. Harriet Harman identifies herself as a feminist and describes ways in which she relies on informal support networks of women MPs when speaking in the chamber (Appendix 2, Interview D, Lines 267-275 and 511). On the other hand Anne Widdecombe expresses extremely negative views about women politicians:

My consistent experience has been that if I want a bad time, I look to women for it. When I was going through selection committees, if I went into the room and most of the people in the room were women, I wrote off that seat before I started. (McDougall 1998: 47)

Other MPs interviewed state that they do not belong to any parliamentary women's groups; that they are loath to present themselves as concerned with the representation of women for fear of marginalisation; and they express the opinion that women's interaction styles are dull. Given these widely differing views and attitudes of women MPs towards women MPs, as well as the fracturing of women as a group across party lines, it is difficult to envisage women MPs undertaking concerted and unified action to improve their minority status.

However, Dahlerup does identify some changes that can be identified as women have moved from a small to a large minority in Scandinavian politics. These include the diminishing of the stereotyping of women; the creation of new role models for women in public life; the gradual removal of open resistance towards women; and fewer voters expressing negative attitudes towards being represented by a woman (1988: 295-6). Certainly, British women MPs report that sexism has greatly diminished over the last ten years; and women MPs continue to be appointed to roles that have previously only been held by men, which supports Dahlerup's assessment of change that may occur as a by-product of an increasing minority of women.

The opinions of women MPs differ greatly, as does their degree of identification with feminist ideologies, but *all* women MPs are caught between (at least) two conflicting expectations. Dahlerup identifies these as follows:

- 1) Women politicians must prove that they are just like (just as able as) male politicians, who in general have longer seniority and whose gender occupied the political arena long before women were allowed to participate.
 - 2) Women politicians must prove that it makes a difference when more women are elected.
- (1988: 279)

These expectations conflict because under the first, women are under pressure to accommodate to the male norms of the institution which may include downplaying their identification as *women* politicians, whilst under the second their identification as women politicians is expected to produce significant improvements to the institution. The expectation that increased numbers of women will lead to change is commonly articulated yet rarely explicitly states how this change is likely to occur:

The air of excitement around the election of Labour's 101 women MPs came partly from the widespread hope that politics would change. This applies both to the type of policies that are implemented and to the culture, reputation and practices of politics itself. Many people believe that increasing the presence of women in parliament will, once a substantial minority has been achieved, help to build a process which is more constructive and less adversarial. (Eagle and Lovenduski 1998: 3)

Expectations of women MPs are therefore high, and the problems they encounter as a minority are multiple. These include tokenism, stereotyping and high visibility; role conflicts (being perceived as too feminine or too masculine); lower rates of promotion; and exclusion from informal networks (Dahlerup 1998: 279). Walsh (2000: 274) interprets the tendency of women to shift between masculine and feminine discursive styles as a way of managing these 'socially ascribed expectations that pull in opposite directions' rather than being conscious attempts to 'disrupt the symbolic meanings attached to the normative gender ideologies that circulate in the public domain' (2000: 274). Differences between women in particular communities of practice also arise out of differing relationships to these socially and institutionally ascribed expectations.

Another constraint upon women's ability to change the masculinist culture of the House of Commons is their representation in the media (Walsh 2001: 101). For example, such media representations as the adoption of the term 'Blair's babes', used to refer to the new intake of Labour women MPs in 1997 at once infantilizes and sexualises their identities. Walsh notes that:

The hidden power of media discourse to reinforce women's segregation and subordination in the public sphere does not depend upon a single article, or even a series of articles, but on systematic tendencies in news reporting, the effect of which is cumulative. (2001: 93)

In her analysis of the media coverage of Margaret Beckett's campaign for the Labour Party leadership in 1994, as well as the coverage of the 1997 general election, Walsh concludes that 'given the increasing importance of mediatized discourse in politics, the media bias against female MPs is likely to undermine their ability to challenge and change the masculinist culture of the House' (2001: 101). This review of research therefore suggests that the complex interplay of socially ascribed expectations and constraints experienced by women MPs is likely to influence them to both accommodate and challenge male discursive norms.

2.3. Gender and Politics.

2.3.1. Introduction

In their introduction to *Gender Power, Leadership and Governance* (1995), Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly point out that women have predominated in research into gender and politics as both authors and subjects. With the exception of Jeff Hearn's (1992) *Men in the Public Eye*, which focuses on the period of 1870-1920 as the time in which a shift was made to 'public patriarchies' (1992: 48), and Wendy Brown's (1988) *Manhood and Politics*, there are very few studies of masculinity and politics. Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) state that this is sometimes at the expense of explicating masculine norms, which should be investigated as 'males, who are much more aligned with masculinity

than any female could be, have gender as a permeating resource to maintain their predominance' (1995: 19). This means that studying the behaviour of men in politics is necessary because 'if we are going to understand the crucial relational power embedded within the gender system, we must understand gender dynamics related to men as gender dynamics rather than as universal norms' (1995: 19).

Studies into public and institutional politics tend to focus on women because feminists and those involved in women's organisations have been concerned with examining the differences of power and advantage offered to women and men in decision-making and legislative institutions. Politics has been described as an area of public life that is 'more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavour' and 'more intensely, self-consciously masculine than most other social practices' (Brown 1988: 13). This has led to the study of women in politics being focussed firstly upon the unequal representation of women and men in political institutions; and secondly upon the marginalisation of and discrimination against women who stand for political office throughout the processes of selection, participation and promotion within political life (which will also affect their representation in these institutions). The following sections on women's representation, marginalisation and participation in politics reflect the aims of the thesis in attempting to investigate the particular constraints and obstacles faced by women in this profession. At the same time it is acknowledged that an understanding of masculine norms is a fundamental part of that investigation.

2.3.2. The recruitment and representation of women in politics.

Underlying the issue of the representation of women in politics and the demand for increased numbers of women in decision-making roles is the understanding that women have particular interests that are best represented by women (Lovenduski 1996). Many researchers (Carroll et al. 1991; Hansen 1997; Thomas 1994) claim that female office-holders 'stress somewhat different issues than do their male counterparts, including several of particular concern to women: education, family leave, childcare, and abortion rights' (Hansen 1997: 87).

This means that if women are under-represented 'policy makers are less attuned than they would otherwise be to women's interests' (Lovenduski 1996: 5). Although the division of such topics and interests by gender is necessarily problematic as it reinforces social stereotypes (in particular of women as carers and educators), and ignores the fact that the experiences of women differ greatly, it is argued that more women in politics would help to reflect the diverse concerns of society as a whole (Norris 1996: 92).

Apart from the issue of the representation of 'women's issues' there is the broader issue of bias towards men in political institutions, which is seen as both the cause and effect of women's political under-representation. Lovenduski (1996) elaborates the sex and gender bias of political institutions by adopting the notion of gender balance in which organisations may be either balanced or biased in respect to sex and/or gender (1996: 5). She proposes a typology that distinguishes between positional balance (the numbers of men and women in organisations), policy balance (the degree to which public policy reflects the needs of women and men equally) and organisational balance which is present when positional and policy balance are institutionalised (1996: 6).

Many comparative political studies have investigated positional balance by comparing the representation of women in political and legislative assemblies, and seeking to understand the reasons for variations in representation that are found. The research of Lovenduski and Norris (1993) compares the representation of women in eleven countries⁴ and identifies three levels of analysis. These are firstly the broad political context within a country including the electoral system, the political culture and the party system. Secondly, factors concerning the ideology and organisation of particular political parties, including their policies on promoting women candidates; and thirdly factors which most directly influence the representation of individuals, such as individual motivation and the attitudes of 'gatekeepers'. On this individual level Norris and Lovenduski (1995) affirm that it is the differential access by women and men to the necessary resources of time, money and political ambition that affects women's recruitment into political positions. Niilo Kauppi (1999) investigates the reasons for the higher representation of women in the European Parliament than in the 'lower

houses' of their national assemblies. She finds that women are better represented in the European parliament because it is an assembly in which women can overturn 'traditional political hierarchies and challenge established political culture' (1999: 338). She also finds that the European parliament is a point of access (for both women and men) into national assemblies, as MEPs often have little political experience. Solheim's (2000) explanation of the high representation of women in Scandinavian politics includes the fact that equal opportunity agreements first made in 1978 were specifically aimed at promoting the equal representation of women and men in politics (2000: 37). Tamale (2000) compares women's representation in African parliaments and finds women to be grossly under-represented. Although South Africa has reached a 30% representation of women in parliament, countries such as Uganda and Namibia fall well under this proportion and in countries such as Djibouti and the Comoros the assemblies are exclusively composed of men (2000: 8).

Strategies to increase the number of women in politics operate on both parliamentary and political party levels. For example, in Uganda there is a constitutional 'sex quota' of reserved seats in parliament and local councils for women (Tamale 2000). In Britain political parties vary with respect to their policies on the recruitment of women. Although the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties have no such strategies in place, the Labour Party adopted a system of all-women shortlists⁵ for 50% of 'winnable' seats⁶ in 1993. Although this policy was short-lived (an industrial tribunal ruled that it was illegal under the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1996), it was an important part of the Labour Party's recruitment practices for the 1997 election. It has been claimed that this policy had a positive effect on the recruitment of women for the 1997 election (Criddle 1997). However, both Stephenson (1998) and Eagle and Lovenduski (1998) claim that once the all-women shortlists are taken out of the equation, the Labour party selections did not favour women, and that there is no evidence to suggest that the culture of the party has changed in favour of selecting women (Eagle and Lovenduski 1998: 29). Childs's (2000: 69) research suggests that all-women shortlists were resisted by many in the Labour party which may have had a detrimental effect on the recruitment of women after 1997⁷.

2.3.3. Women as a minority group in politics

Apart from issues of the recruitment and representation of women in political assemblies, much research into women and politics is concerned with the problems of marginalisation and discrimination against women once they have been appointed to these roles. As discussed in section 2.2.4. above, these studies have been heavily influenced by the idea that once a numerical 'critical mass' (Kanter 1977) of women have been appointed to political institutions, their ability to achieve this will increase. This research has also been influenced by research by Helen Mayer Hacker (1951) who defines women as a 'minority group' in society. While this minority group status is a different concept to that of women in minority positions (such as political assemblies) they are nevertheless linked:

The connection of the minority group status of women and women in actual minority positions derives from the fact that many of the problems that women experience as minorities within organisations are related to the 'minority' status of women in society at large. (Dahlerup 1988: 278)

Hacker also claims that women display many of the psychological characteristics ascribed to minorities. These include:

Self-hatred, feelings of inferiority, denying a feeling of group identification and yet developing a separate sub-culture within the dominant culture. Subjectively denying that they belong to the group 'women', many women perceive the discrimination they meet as just the consequence of individual shortcomings. Women who make it in a male world, on the other hand, will try to dissociate themselves from other women. (Dahlerup 1988: 277)

According to Kanter's (1977) study of women in a large U.S. corporation, if the representation of women is under 15% (a 'skewed' group), the minority group become 'tokens' with the consequence that they are considered symbols for their entire group. Kanter's theory of tokenism has been criticised because it is 'gender neutral' (Zimmer 1988), or in other words it does not recognise the interplay of the minority status attributed to women in society as a whole and their minority status within institutions (quoted above), but only recognises the

importance of numerical representation. Toren and Kraus (1987: 1029) conclude that 'the fate of minorities is not determined by their relative size alone' after carrying out research into men and women in academic institutions. They found that academic women in the U.S. do better in terms of rank and promotion when they work in the male dominated 'hard sciences' than when they work in humanities and social sciences where women have greater representation (Zimmer 1988: 69). Merrill (1985) found that although women doctors in a minority appeared to suffer the negative effects of tokenism, male nurses in a minority did not.

These studies point to a more complex explanation for the treatment and performance of women (and men) in occupations in which they are in a numerical minority. One important factor is that of the 'occupational appropriateness' which arises out of gender typing and establishes what is and is not appropriate work for men and women to do (Yoder 1991: 183). Studies of tokenism in gender inappropriate occupations (i.e. those that are historically, traditionally and numerically dominated by either women or men) have found that numerically scarce women 'experience performance pressures, isolation, and role encapsulation, but men do not' (1991: 183). However, as Yoder points out, *all* these studies have been carried out in gender inappropriate occupations, rather than those that are gender-appropriate or gender-neutral, which means that the full extent of the interaction of gender, numerical representation and gender appropriateness is yet to be understood:

If occupational appropriateness is unrelated to these findings, numeric imbalance and gender status may interact such that women in a gender-neutral or gender-appropriate occupation will experience performance pressures, isolation, and role encapsulation, but men will not. (1991: 180-1)

Linked to this notion of occupational appropriateness, 'intrusiveness' is another factor that interacts with gender to affect the behaviour and treatment of a group in a minority position. This is defined by Yoder (1991) as the negative behaviour of the majority towards either the introduction of a small minority, or towards a minority whose numbers 'surge' and increase rapidly. According to this concept,

the majority becomes threatened by the introduction or rapid increase of the minority and discriminatory behaviour is the result 'in order to limit the power gains of the lower-status minority'⁸.

Furthermore, Yoder (1991: 189) suggests that 'another discriminatory reaction to the intrusion of women into prestigious male-dominated occupations may be the channelling of women into less prestigious sub-specialities or female-dominated 'ghettos' within the occupation'. This is particularly pertinent to politics, as one of the understandings underlying the need for a higher representation of women is precisely that they can represent these 'sub-specialities' or topics. If women represent these topics in 'ghettos' it is important to consider whether this is a result of the negative effects of gender-typing and intrusiveness, or whether it is a result of positive action by women to represent the issues that concern women in society.

The treatment and behaviour of a minority cannot therefore be simply explained in terms of their numerical representation: 'It does not seem that scarcity alone can explain the reactions of men to women co-workers; nor is there any evidence to suggest that women's occupational problems can be alleviated by achieving numerical equality' (Zimmer 1988: 72). Instead, a focus on tokenism can 'divert attention away from sexism' (Zimmer 1988: 72), and limit the identification of the multiple factors (including occupational appropriateness and intrusiveness) affecting women workers in minority positions.

In order to change women's status at work it is argued that:

We must understand the relationship between women, men and work, and other institutional systems. Improvement in female occupational status entails more than change in the behaviour of individual women – or even of men. It involves, instead, alterations and adjustments in the behaviour and operation of each society's basic institutions – its family, schools and colleges, employers and unions, laws and political institutions. (Zimmer 1988: 73)

As mentioned in section 2.2.4., Dahlerup sees that change will come about by 'critical acts', the most important determinant of which is the willingness and

ability of the minority to mobilise the resources of the organisation or institution to improve the situation for themselves and the whole minority group (1988: 296).

Within the House of Commons there has been a focus on change with the formation of the Modernisation Select Committee in 1997. This committee aims to make changes to the legislative process, parliamentary accountability, MPs' work patterns and the style and forms of proceedings (Seaton and Winetrobe 1999). According to Puwar (1997b), the force for some of these changes comes from women MPs who want to work in a 'family friendly' organisation. As Puwar points out, this institution was established by men who traditionally did not have domestic responsibilities. Harriet Harman articulates the view that women are in the vanguard of change:

Women have been the pressure for making the House of Commons more rational, of making the debate more coherent and more transparent and having an argument where there is one but not having an argument where there isn't one. And because women have been in the forefront of the hours changing and because for women time is a commodity which it is not for men..(Appendix 2, Interview D, lines 425-434).

There is pressure for change within the House of Commons, however the success of these moves is still to be realised. Although more 'family friendly' hours have been introduced (the House sits at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays and stops before 7 p.m. (rather than 10 p.m.) on Thursdays), there is scepticism about the ability of the modernisation committee to effect more fundamental changes. MPs within the Conservative Party have shown particular resistance to change, describing Anne Taylor (the Leader of the House 1997-2000, and therefore the person in charge of reform) and her relationship to the House as 'indifferent, disastrous and catastrophic' (Seaton and Winetrobe 1999: 154). The commitment of the government to effect real changes has also been questioned:

The current government has been accused by some critics of undertaking a public 'modernisation' exercise, leading to what are said to be relatively minor reforms (abolition of the 'opera hat', an extra desk in division lobbies, some flexibility in length of speeches and so on). (Seaton and Winetrobe 1999: 158)

Therefore, even with the pressures for more 'family friendly' working practices and other reforms, the progress of the Modernisation Committee is minimal, and it appears to have a number of priorities other than improving the working practices for women MPs.

2.3.4. Gender and participation in political speech events.

In this section I review research into the participation of women and men in political speech events, such as committee hearings and debates. Most of these studies fall within the discipline of politics, rather than linguistics and use as their basis Gilligan's (1982) claim that women in politics use a 'different voice' to that typically associated with politics as a male-dominated profession.

Sharon Broughton and Sonia Palmieri's (1999) work on the verbal contributions made by women and men politicians in the Australian parliament investigates the types of arguments used in a debate on euthanasia. The motion of the debate was against the practice of euthanasia. This debate was selected because it was one that appealed to the 'individual conscience' of the politician 'where party should not be a defining predictor of voting patterns as is usually the case in the Australian parliament' (1999: 31). This research uses a content analysis approach to identify the arguments used for and against the bill. The sources of these arguments were also identified as coming either from the electorate, from personal experiences, or from considering arguments from opposing viewpoints. They found that there were differences according to gender in the arguments put forward. For example, women politicians in support of the bill (and against euthanasia) most frequently put forward arguments based on the issue of palliative care (that methods of pain relief for the ill should be improved), whilst men most frequently put forward arguments upon the basis of morality. They also found that women more frequently contextualised their references with personal experiences than men. Overall Broughton and Palmieri conclude that women and men did argue differently in this debate and 'in doing so may, in sufficient numbers, alter the status quo' (1999: 43). This research does, however appear to adopt the 'critical mass' theory without considering any of the criticisms outlined in the section above. Furthermore, the idea that a debate on euthanasia will be

free from political partisanship seems somewhat naïve in that an individual politician's arguments and vote on euthanasia is not 'free' of their alignment to particular political ideologies, which is also expressed in their political party membership. Therefore the alignment of an individual to a particular political ideology is likely to be a significant determinant of the ways in which they argue and vote.

Anthony Nownes and Patricia Freeman (1998) investigate the practice of political lobbying in three U.S. legislatures. Using statistical methods they find that female lobbyist are underrepresented compared with men, and that they are more likely than men to represent charitable organisations. However, in terms of the techniques used to lobby politicians (such as coalition building), they find no difference between women and men lobbyists. They also find that women are taken as seriously as men (in terms of how often they are approached for advice) and that: 'even when we control for factors such as experience, group type, and education, women tend to be approached more frequently than men' (1998: 1195). Finally, they conclude that women display both the 'willingness and ability to engage in the 'rough and tumble' politics of interest representation, and to use the same advocacy techniques that men do' (1998: 1196), which in turn means that women 'need not be relegated to nonconflictual and subservient political roles' (1998: 1196).

In contrast, Lyn Kathlene's (1994, 1995⁹) research on the influence of the position and gender of politicians in Colorado State committee hearings finds that the sex of speakers is highly significant in all measures of speaking behaviour. She analyses participation in terms of turn length and interruptions made and received by female and male committee members, chairs, witnesses and sponsors. She finds that women in all these positions spoke less, took fewer turns, and made fewer interruptions than their male counterparts. She also found that sex continued to be significant even when other factors such as the politicians' interest in the bill, their party affiliation and their 'freshman status' were taken into account. As the chair of committees men took the floor away from speakers and 'controlled the committees by making substantive comments more than female chairs did' (1995: 178), whereas women as chairs were more likely to act

as facilitators. This leads Kathlene to suggest that 'Men used their position of power to control hearings in ways that we commonly associate with the notion of political power and leadership' (1995: 178). This in turn affected the participation of witnesses and sponsors as female chairs tended to proceed first to witness testimonies, and men to the questioning of the sponsors of the legislation. Female sponsors were questioned more by male committee members and at an earlier stage of the hearing, whereas male sponsors were questioned less, and later in the hearing: 'In other words females, but not males, in positions of importance have their ideas scrutinised by rank-and-file men' (1995: 179).

Kathlene's research also supports criticisms of the 'critical mass' theory such as Yoder's (1991) theory of intrusiveness (see above) as she finds that 'gender power operates such that men dominate discussion overall; in part they do so by focusing on shutting out the 'intrusive' women. Perhaps most insidious, women do not even realise that men participate more' (1995: 176). The intrusiveness effect is most apparent in committee members' participation as Kathlene finds that 'men rather than women became significantly more vocal when women comprised greater proportions of the committee' (1995: 179). This means that 'the more women on a committee the more silenced the women became' (1995: 181). Kathlene discusses these findings by referring to Smith-Lovin and Brody's (1989) research, which suggests that men, but not women, differed (in their interruption rates and the types of interruption) according to the sex composition of a group. This shows that 'men are acting as if sex is a status characteristic ... [but] women are behaving as though sex were not a status characteristic for them' (Smith-Lovin and Brody 1998 cited in Kathlene 1995: 186).

These findings lead Kathlene to assert that as it is men's behaviour that varies over these interactions (rather than women's behaviour), the focus of explanations should be upon male norms instead of or as well as female norms:

Are men socialised to be dominant, and therefore act without self-restraint, which becomes especially pronounced when they acquire positions of power within institutions? Or are they socialised to be 'independent thinkers' producing a false sense of certainty about what is best and what is important, creating individuals who undervalue, override or ignore the

opinions and concerns of others unlike themselves? These latter two questions ask why men are different than women while giving implicit positive value to the so-called feminine qualities rather than vice versa. (Kathlene 1995: 187)

The implications of these questions are particularly pertinent to research into male and female participation in particular settings, as it is in these institutional contexts (rather than informal ones) that men exhibited the greatest variability in their behaviour. This leads Kathlene to conclude that 'parliamentary rules and procedures adversely affect women and benefit men' (1995: 181).

Karen Adams' (1992) linguistic research into turn taking rule violations in U.S. televised political debates finds that women observe the rules of debates more than men. The rules of televised debates include the restriction of speakers to particular topics, and time restrictions on each contribution. Adams finds that some women candidates used the principle that 'more of the floor means greater advantage' (1992: 9) by talking beyond their allocated turnspace and making uninvited interventions. However she also suggests that most women candidates (but not men) take the equality of turns and debate rules seriously. According to Adams, women who only use the pre-allocated turnspace (rather than turns gained by turn violations) are 'accruing power by obeying rules' (1992: 9). Furthermore, some women candidates did not view the floor as a valuable resource, and in one case a woman candidate gives a minute of her turn to her opponent. This leads Adams to conclude that 'For women a more valuable strategy (than turn violations) is to obey the spirit of the rules and to show themselves as good citizens during the debates' (1992: 4). However, Adams does not explain exactly how this strategy of adhering to the rules actually benefits women candidates. It may be that adhering to the rules creates a better impression with the audience, but this is not suggested in the research.

The research of Carole Edelsky and Karen Adams (1990) is also concerned with U.S. televised political debates. In this case it is suggested that the debate operates according to two sets of rules: the 'ideal' sequence of the debate according to formal debate rules, and the actual rules of debates and the actual practices of participants (see Chapter Five, p.113). Adams and Edelsky found that

‘where there was least slippage between the actual and the ideal, there was the most equality in the allocation of debate resources (...). Where there was most slippage, there were gendered differences in the allocation of interactional resources (1990: 186). These gendered differences were that men obtained extra turns, safer turn spaces and more chance to follow up their topics.

This overview of research into the participation of men and women in different political speech events shows that overwhelmingly men were found to dominate mixed-sex interaction by taking more turns and generally having a greater share of linguistic resources. The ways in which men and women politicians participate in House of Commons speech events are considered in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Before this analysis is undertaken I consider methodological issues in the following chapter, and describe the specific interactional and wider institutional contexts of these speech events in Chapter Four.

Notes

¹ See further discussion on CA in Chapter Three, section 3.4.1., p.66

² Lovenduski and Randall (1993: 53) claim that Thatcher did improve opportunities for MPs, making it easier for them to achieve high status roles.

³ Three out of five of the interviewees mentioned the ‘critical mass’ concept in relation to improving equality in the House of Commons (See Appendix 2, Interview A, line 462, p.321; Interview B, line 199, p.328; and Interview D line 174, p.338 and line 218, p.339).

⁴ These are Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Holland, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

⁵ Other strategies include quotas on shortlists (where at least one of the women candidates must be shortlisted), pairing or ‘twinning’ (See Chapter Eight on the Scottish Parliament) and ‘zip lists’ in which a list consists of alternate male and female candidates thus promoting 50% representation of women and men (used by the Liberal Democrat Party for MEP’s election to the European Parliament, but probably illegal - like all-women shortlists). (Eagle and Lovenduski 1998: 17-23)

⁶ Winnable seats are defined as those that could be gained by Labour with up to a 6% electoral ‘swing’ (Childs 2000: 58).

⁷ Puwar (1997b) also reports a negative reaction to all-women shortlists. One of the Labour MPs she interviewed even claimed that ‘one or two MPs are saying they will not retire at the next general election because they don’t want women to take their places’ (1997b: 6).

⁸ Yoder also makes the point here that often male-majority professions are more prestigious and have bigger salaries than female-majority professions, which may mean the negative effects of intrusiveness are greater in male-majority professions (1991: 184).

⁹ Kathlene’s 1995 publication is a re-working and extension of the findings published in 1994. The two publications are similar. I use the 1995 chapter here because it includes an extensive discussion of the findings. The earlier paper includes more details about the method of the research (including the categorisation of interruptions).

Chapter Three: Method

3.1. Introduction

This is an empirical project that uses qualitative methods (along with some basic quantification such as counting frequencies of particular linguistic features) in order to contextualise and analyse transcripts of linguistic data. I adopt an ethnographic approach in that the linguistic analysis is informed by the subjects' own perceptions, which are elicited by undertaking semi-structured interviews. This process also recognises that the subjects of research should be empowered collaborators within the research process (Stacey 1988; Stanley and Wise 1993). Furthermore, this thesis follows the ethnographic tradition in the way in which it attempts to account for the contexts in which experiences and language use occur. This contextualisation is achieved by undertaking an ethnographic description of the norms, procedures and conventions of debates, using Hymes' (1972a) Ethnography of Speaking framework (see Chapter Four, p.91). I also describe the wider contexts within which political debates occur. This detailed description also facilitates the identification of the ways in which gender is likely to be one of the factors that may affect an individual's membership within this Community of Practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Wenger 1998).

The methods I use for the linguistic analysis of debates draw on different approaches within discourse analysis. The analysis of floor apportionment and turn-taking undertaken in Chapter Five draws upon Conversation Analysis (CA), and in particular the model of turn-taking proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). In order to identify linguistic features that may contribute to an adversarial linguistic style in parliamentary question times (Chapter Six), I draw upon a range of discourse analytic research, including that on questions and responses (Harris 1984); political questions and answers (Wilson 1990); and upon categories for analysis (such as the use of pronouns) used by Critical Discourse analysts (Fairclough 1989; Van Dijk 1998).

The next section of this chapter (3.2.) explains the overall methodological aims of the thesis. Section 3.3. discusses ethnography and the ethnography of speaking,

then the discourse analytic approaches outlined above are discussed in section 3.4. Finally, in section 3.5. I give details of the methods of data collection and transcription for discourse analysis and interviews. A full description of the data corpus is given in Appendix 3.

3.2. General Methodological Aims and Issues

The methodology adopted for this research aims to be qualitative and highly contextualised whilst at the same time being open to interpretations other than my own. As many feminists have pointed out, there is no uniform canon of feminist research principles (Harding 1987; Stacey 1988; Stanley and Wise 1993) but in general this approach stems from feminist critiques of traditional scientific research for having androcentric and sexist biases¹ (for example Oakley 1974), and the questioning of traditional positivist approaches as being the best tool for capturing human experience, and women's experience in particular. These criticisms have pointed out firstly that science is not objective and value-free, but that objectivity is itself a value (Campbell 1995). The qualitative methods of ethnography and discourse analysis adopted for this research have been selected because they emphasise the importance of understanding the meaning of experience, actions and events as these are interpreted 'through the eyes of particular participants, researchers and (sub) cultures' in a way that shows a sensitivity 'to the complexities of behavior and meaning in the contexts where they typically or 'naturally' occur' (Henwood 1995: 27). Within these qualitative methods (and in particular discourse analysis), the numerical quantification of particular features is used to guide interpretations. For example, the total number of speaking turns taken by MPs in the corpus of debates are quantified (Chapter Five) in order to give an overall impression of the participation of men and women MPs in the debating chamber.

A second feminist criticism is that traditional scientific methods can be exploitative of the subjects of research in order to gain data and evidence. In contrast, feminist research has been described as 'contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved, socially relevant, ...inclusive of emotions and events as

experienced' (Nielsen 1990: 6). Feminist research methodologies have been described as 'assaulting the hierarchical, exploitative relations of conventional research ... to seek an egalitarian research process characterised by authenticity, reciprocity, and intersubjectivity between the researcher and her 'subjects' (Stacey 1988: 22). As the subjects of this research belong to a closed, elite community the relationship between the researcher and the research pose some unusual and problematic features, which are discussed in detail in section 3.5.2. below.

Feminist scholarship also acknowledges the role of reflexivity as a source of insight within the research process (Furnow and Cook 1991), and the importance of the way in which the research is represented within the research community (Gill 1998). Reflexivity is the activity of reflecting upon, critically examining and analysing the nature of the research process. This chapter aims to take a reflexive stance in relation to the methodological decisions taken during the course of the research. Many of my own interpretations are also reflexive in the sense that as far as possible I ask 'insiders' within community to contribute their own interpretations and experiences through interviews (see section 3.5.2.).

3.3. Ethnography and the Ethnography of Speaking

This thesis uses ethnography, broadly defined, as a general method in order to describe, understand and explain the particular cultural norms of the House of Commons as a Community of Practice, and uses the Ethnography of Speaking (Hymes 1972a) as a framework for systematically describing interactional norms and procedures. Contemporary ethnography is typically multi-method research, which usually includes observation, participation, archival research and interviewing (Reinharz 1992: 46). Participant observation is not possible in the House of Commons where only Members of Parliament are allowed in the debating chamber but observation, archival research² and interviewing are methods that are used in this thesis (see section 3.5.). Additionally, ethnographic research is characterised by an 'openness to categories and modes of thought and

behaviour that may not have been anticipated by the researcher' (Saville-Troike 1982: 4).

Traditionally ethnographies were used in anthropology to provide analytic descriptions of cultures that were unfamiliar to researchers³. In these cases, where the researcher is an 'outsider' in a community, the researcher aims to identify the 'everyday' conventions of the community by observing and participating in unfamiliar settings and events for long periods of time. Contemporary ethnographies are used in all areas of social research and concern communities that are either familiar or unfamiliar to researchers. When researching a community that is familiar to the researcher the challenge lies in 'rendering strange what we take as given' (Toren 1996: 104) because the researcher's familiarity with the culture can lead to them overlooking norms and conventions that they take for granted. In the case of this research I am certainly an 'outsider' with respect to the community of MPs, and many of the norms and conventions identified in the ethnographic description undertaken in Chapter Four were unfamiliar to me before undertaking the research. At the same time the setting of the House of Commons debating chamber and some of the conventions of debates are extremely familiar to me, as extracts from debates (and particularly Prime Minister's Question Time) are regularly covered by print and television media.

The ethnography of speaking⁴ (Hymes 1972a) applies ethnographic methods specifically to language use. The concept of 'communicative competence' is a key part of this approach as Hymes contested that a speaker's competence in using language rested entirely upon the unconscious knowledge of grammatical rules (as Chomsky's (1965) 'competence/performance' distinction proposes). Instead, Hymes recognised that speakers of a language also have knowledge about the *appropriate* use of language in any given context. It is this knowledge about 'what can be said when, where, by whom, to whom, in what manner and in what particular social circumstances' (Saville-Troike 1982: 8) that form rules of speaking that are collectively referred to as a speaker's 'communicative competence'. The ethnography of speaking aims to describe the rules that make up this communicative competence within a particular 'speech community'.

A speech community has been defined as ‘any human aggregate characterised by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage’ (Gumperz and Hymes 1972). A speech community therefore has a shared set of linguistic resources and rules for interaction and interpretation. For the purposes of ethnographic investigation, a speech community may comprise a nation state, or it may be a group of people engaged in a common enterprise, such as in this case, Members of Parliament engaged in debates in the British House of Commons. As in a CoP, an individual belongs to a number of different or overlapping speech communities (Saville-Troike 1982: 20), so an MP as well as being a ‘Member of Parliament’ might be a member of the Labour Party, a mother, a member of a local community and a lawyer at the same time. The idea of a speech community is similar to that of the CoP in many respects. However, in a CoP members share particular practices (rather than only sharing norms and the evaluation of those norms); membership of the CoP is internally constructed through those practices (whereas in a speech community membership can be externally defined); and in a CoP members have a shared goal(s), which is not necessarily the case in a speech community (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999: 179).

Hymes (1972a: 35-71) proposed a hierarchical arrangement of units in order to describe communicative behaviour within a speech community (or in this thesis a CoP). These are the speech situation, the speech event, and the speech act. According to Hymes’ definition the highest of these units, the ‘speech situation’, is the social context in which communication takes place. Examples of speech situations could be religious ceremonies; meeting friends for a drink; taking part in an sporting event or any other context in which speech occurs. Rules of speaking form one of the contexts of a speech situation, but other activities apart from speaking take place (such as taking part in a procession, drinking or playing sport). For the purposes of this thesis the speech situation is ‘a sitting of the House of Commons’.

The next unit is the ‘speech event’ which consists of linguistic interaction. Speech situations comprise one or more speech events. In the House of Commons the speech situation could comprise one speech event (such as a debate), or a

number of speech events such as a Ministerial statement; a departmental question time and a debate. Speech events consist of one or more speech acts (such as 'greeting', 'apologising') or in the case of debates or other House of Commons events making a speech or asking a question.

The ethnographic description in Chapter Four is concerned with describing the different types of speech events such as debates and question times that occur within the speech situation. As well as proposing different units with which to approach an ethnographic description, Hymes (1972a: 35-71) proposed that there are particular components of a speech event that should be described. Hymes organises these components into eight groups (often referred to as the SPEAKING grid as this word is a mnemonic for the different components). The components are: the setting (the physical and temporal location of the event); the participants (the speaker, addressee and the audience); the ends (outcomes and goals); the act sequence (the form and content of the event); the key (the manner of speaking such as serious or humorous); the instrumentalities (the modes of communication and dialects or registers of speech); the norms of interaction (for example the organisation of turn-taking, the norms of interpretation such as conventional ways of drawing inferences; and the genres (for example casual speech or poetry).

The ethnographic description proposed in Chapter Four uses these components to form a macro-description (Saville-Troike 1982: 139) of speech events which focuses on the rules, procedures and conventions (both formal and informal) of debates and question times in the House of Commons. The SPEAKING components are used as a guide to the type of categories likely to be salient. Interactional micro-analyses of speech acts within speech events are undertaken in Chapter Five (on debates), Chapter Six (on Question Times), and Chapter Seven (on humour and irony in different speech events). The use of Hymes' SPEAKING components are viewed as a heuristic (Schiffrin 1994: 146) or an exploratory framework which starts with description, but that also attempts to explain 'why particular events occur and why they have particular characteristics' (Cameron 2001: 57). The ethnographic description incorporates interview data

with MPs and is based on observation, and information from guides and handbooks on the workings of parliament. As Cameron (2001: 57) points out:

Explaining the significance of a particular speech event involves relating its characteristics to a broader range of cultural beliefs, practices and values – both those relating directly and specifically to language and those relating to other things, such as the culture's view of what a 'good person' is, or its attitudes towards emotion or conflict.

The wider contexts of parliament such as background information on debates and political assemblies accompany the use of the SPEAKING framework in order to account for these beliefs, practice and values.

3.2. Discourse Analysis

3.4.1. Conversation Analysis (CA)

The analysis of floor apportionment undertaken in Chapter Five of the thesis is based upon a conversation analytic (CA) approach to spoken discourse analysis and in particular the model of turn-taking proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). CA is appropriate to the general methodological aims of the thesis (outlined in section 3.2. above) in that it looks for recurring structural patterns within naturally occurring data, and views language as a form of social action. CA does not rely upon premature theorising about the units or structures that comprise discourse⁵, but instead aims to identify sequential patterns in data: 'what CA tries to do is to explicate the inherent theories-in-use of members' practices as *lived orders*, rather than trying to order the world externally by applying a set of traditionally available concepts' (Ten Have 1999: 32, *Italics in original*).

The principles of CA are based on an ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkel 1974) which is concerned with linking what people 'do' in interaction with what they 'know' in interaction (Jaworski and Coupland 1999: 19). Making this knowledge about everyday affairs (such as turn-taking in conversations) explicit

is one of the main concerns of ethnomethodology, and within the CA approach this involves concentrating on the talk of participants without taking into account external and contextual factors. The form of CA that only looks to what the participants themselves make relevant in their talk is sometimes referred to as 'pure' CA (Cameron 2001; Ten Have 1999), and is one that is not compatible with an ethnographic approach which seeks to contextualise the analysis of discourse. This also has implications for a feminist approach to a CA analysis, as pure CA does not acknowledge that the hierarchical organisation of power in society according to gender is significant in the analysis of discourse beyond the participants' own 'orientation' towards such categories within the talk itself (Stokoe and Smithson 2001: 219). A feminist approach also contradicts one of CA's basic tenets: that researchers come to the data with a neutral stance without any a priori theoretical assumptions. This problem is summarised by Stokoe and Smithson:

CA would argue that if gender is embedded in society then it should be observable in talk, feminists would maintain that it is not only impossible to come to the data 'without bringing any problems to it' (Sacks 1992) but not even desirable or valid to try. (2001: 221)

A number of researchers have criticised CA for its lack of attention to the cultural and historical context of interactions (Besnier 1989; Duranti 1997; Moerman 1988), and as with the method adopted for this thesis have proposed a combination of CA with the cultural detail characteristic of the ethnographic approach. Certainly the detailed models proposed by CA analysts provide valuable insights into the sequential organisation and structures of talk, as shown by the use of CA in the analysis of institutional talk (for example Atkinson 1984; Drew and Heritage 1992) and in critical or feminist analyses (for example Ainsworth-Vaughn 1992; Davis 1988; Zimmerman and West 1975). These 'applied' CA studies do not adhere to all the ethnomethodological principles of pure CA but instead provide data-based analyses using CA practices combined within a framework of 'wider concerns' (Ten Have 1999: 161).

In the CA-based analysis undertaken in Chapter Five, The CA model of turn-taking in conversations proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (SSJ) (1974)

is used as a framework for the analysis of floor apportionment. As well taking account of contextual information that may give rise to particular institutional inferences, I make the assumption that power in this case can be viewed as an economy operating on the micro-political level of interaction. In this case possession of the floor is one element that contributes to the construction of MPs as powerful or powerless participants in debates. I also view power (through a participant's control over the debate floor) as being linked to gender and operating upon ideological and institutional levels (Gal 1992: 160).

The use of SSJ's model of turn-taking in conversations provides a useful template against which to compare details of the turn-taking system in debates. The turn-taking system in debates and the debate 'floor' are discussed in Chapter Five because the details of interaction are dependent upon the ethnographic description presented in Chapter Four. This model has also provided the basis of discriminating between 'inadvertent' overlaps and interruptions that are considered to be violative of the turn-taking rules and associated with dominant behaviour. The role of this model in gender and language research into conversational dominance is discussed further in Chapter Five.

3.4.2. Discourse analysis and the identification of adversarial and gendered linguistic practices.

Chapter Six of the thesis is concerned with identifying linguistic practices that may constitute an adversarial linguistic style in Prime Minister's and departmental Question Times. As there is no previous linguistic research that attempts to describe an adversarial style (in any context) the method used is necessarily eclectic and relies firstly upon the identification of possible adversarial features in relevant research in linguistics and language and gender studies. Secondly, linguistic features thought to be characteristic of an adversarial style are identified through the close analysis of transcripts of exchanges between the Prime Minister (Tony Blair) and the leader of the main opposition party (William Hague)⁶. Finally, I identify the variation in the use of these adversarial features by MPs according to their gender, party affiliation and status as senior or junior MPs.

The analysis of the transcripts of Prime Minister's Question Time exchanges show recurrent adversarial features such as the use of conducive questions, the use of contrasts, and the hyperbolic and negative descriptions of opponents and their parties (see section 6.3., p.164). The use of these features varies between participants in a number of departmental and Prime Minister's Question time exchanges (section 6.4., p.176). I attempt to account for this variation in a systematic way by identifying all the adversarial features used by male and female MPs from different parties and of differing status in a corpus of question time sessions⁷. I achieve this by 'scoring' each question and response according to the presence of the adversarial linguistic features (the scoring of these adversarial features is explained in detail in section 6.5.3., p.191). This then shows the overall number of adversarial (and non-adversarial) questions asked by MPs, and also the quantity of adversarial features in each questioning turn to allow a classification of the degree to which each question is adversarial.

The identification of adversarial features within question times is reliant upon my analysis of transcripts and the contextual information presented in Chapter Four. When interviewed MPs claimed that an adversarial style existed in question times, yet they were unable to identify how this style was realised linguistically beyond referring to verbal 'personal attacks' on opposing MPs (see Appendix 2 Interview D, lines 309-343, p.341). This may show that the adversarial style has become 'naturalised' (Fairclough 1995: 27) as an accepted part of House of Commons interaction, but at least shows that the MPs I interviewed do not reflect upon how adversarial contributions are constructed linguistically.

The method of using a scoring system in order to identify adversarial questions is not intended to make absolute, quantitative claims about the adversarial nature of different MPs' contributions. It is used in order to guide judgements about the extent to which MPs' questions can be described as adversarial or not, and systematically compare different speech events and exchanges. There is a great deal of variability in the degree to which questions are adversarial, and using the adversarial 'score' enabled the analysis of a large amount of data in order to try to identify patterns with which to explain this variability.

Chapter Seven of the thesis is concerned with the manipulation of the serious debate ‘key’ using humour or irony. The identification of this subject of is based on my turn-by turn observation of all speech events in the 60-hour data corpus⁸, during which I noted that humour and irony serve particular functions in this context. I identify the use of humour, and in particular the use of sexist and sexual humour as being practised more by male MPs than female MPs. The practice of ‘filibustering’ is also investigated as a practice that involves irony, and that may be undertaken by men MPs but not women. The full 60-hour data corpus was used (see the description in Figure 2 below, and a full description of all the speech events in the corpus in Appendix 3, p.361) in order to incorporate all the different types of speech event in the House of Commons, and to identify as many examples as possible of the practices being analysed. Examples of these practices were then transcribed, and their functions in debates analysed.

3.5 Data Collection and Transcription

3.5.1 Collecting and transcribing the language of the debating chamber

The proceedings of debates within the House of Commons are available to the public in the form of the ‘Hansard’ report⁹. This is referred to as a ‘verbatim’ report because it is recorded by shorthand transcribers in the debating chamber and is intended to represent exactly what MPs say in debates. However, the editorial policies of the Hansard mean that it is not an accurate representation of the language used by MPs. Stef Slembrouk (1992) compared the spoken language of the debating chamber with the written Hansard ‘verbatim’ report and found that apart from the obvious orthographic conventions (such as punctuation) other editorial policies made the written text very different from the spoken version. Slembrouk (1992: 104-107) notes that these editorial practices include: filtering out spokenness (for example repetition, false starts and grammatical slips); ‘translation’ into standard English (for example by standardising informal and regional variants and contracted verb forms); and ensuring that utterances are explicit and well-formed (for example by ‘repairing’ obscure utterances). Figure 1 below is an extract from the Hansard report:

Figure 1: Extract from the Hansard report (Prime Minister's Questions 8th July 1998, column 355).

Jane Griffiths (Reading, East): Does my right hon. Friend recall that the Tories campaigned in support of poverty pay by fighting to try to stop the Government's National Minimum Wage Bill? Does he hope, as I do, that the Tories will, for once, stick to their principles, and at the next election we shall campaign on having brought in a minimum wage—

Madam Speaker: Order. I must remind the hon. Lady and the House that the Prime Minister is responsible only for his Government's policies, not for the activities of the Opposition. If she could rephrase her question in some way, of course I will hear it. I am sure that the Prime Minister is already forming an answer in which he will enunciate his responsibility in terms of policy on these matters.

Ms Griffiths, this is your first question at Prime Minister's Question Time. Could you rephrase it in some way so that it is about matters for which the Prime Minister is responsible?

Jane Griffiths: Thank you Madam Speaker. I stand corrected.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the Conservative party – *[Interruption.]* Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our policy is to support the poorest workers in this country?

Madam Speaker: Well done, that girl. Well done.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. The Government will continue to support the minimum wage. We look forward to hearing a position from the Conservative party.

Part of this exchange from Prime Minister's Question Time is also used in the analysis of floor apportionment in Chapter Five. Transcript 1 below shows this section which has been transcribed from video data using a transcription scheme suitable for discourse analysis (see section 3.5.1. below). A comparison of the Hansard version above with the transcribed version below illustrates Slembrouk's points about the editorial changes made to the Hansard. For example Transcript 1 attempts to represent all the sounds made by MPs in the debating chamber, including shouting and cheering, and individual words or phrases that are shouted out by MPs (lines 12 and 17).

Transcript 1. Jane Griffiths' Question to the Prime Minister (08/07/98, Video extract 1)

KEY: SP = the Speaker; JG = Jane Griffiths (Labour); PM = Prime Minister
 MPs = 'crowd' noises made by MPs; 1MP one MP speaking from a sitting position
 (O) = Opposition; (L) = Labour; *Italics* = speech from a sitting position
 (.) = micropause of less than a second; (1) timed pause in seconds; underline = emphasis on word or syllable; CAPS = shouting

1SP : order order I must remind the Honourable Lady and the House that
 2SP : the Prime Minister is responsible only for his own government's policies (.) and
 MPs : *cheer*
 3SP : not for the the activities of the Opposition (.) if she could rephrase her question in
 MPs : *cheermuttermutter* *cheercheer*
 4SP : some way of course I would hear it and I am sure that the Prime Minister is
 5SP : already forming an answer (.) whereby ha ha ha ha whereby (.) he will enunciate
 MPs : *LAUGH**LAUGH**laugh muttermuttermuttermutter*
 6SP : his responsibilities in terms of policy on these matters (.) Miss Griffiths it is
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermuttermutter*
 7SP : your first question in Prime Minister's question time (.) could you rephrase it in
 1MP : *well done*
 8SP : some way th that the Prime Minister is responsible (4)
 MPs : *laughlaughlaughmuttermuttermutter*
 9JG (L) : thank you madam speaker I stand corrected (1)
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermuttermuttermuttermutter*
 10JG (L) : would the would the Prime Minister agree with me that
 1MP (O) : *muttermuttermuttermutter*
 11 JG(L) : if (.) the (.) party opposite (2)
 1MP (O) : *NO NO no*
 MPs : *JEERJEERJEERjeer*
 12SP : quiet QUIET (7)
 MPs : *JEERmuttermuttermuttermutter*
 1MP (L) : *policy policy confirm our policy policy*
 13JG (L) : would the would the Prime Minister agree with me (.) w would he would he
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermutter*
 14JG (L) : share with me in confirming that our policy is to support the poorest workers
 MPs : *cheercheer*
 15JG (L) : in this country (5)
 MPs : *cheercheer cheerCHEERCHEERcheercheermuttermuttermuttermutter*
 16SP : well done that girl well done ha ha (4)
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermuttermuttermutterLAUGH**laughlaughlaugh*
 17{P M} : my honourable friend is quite right (.) quite right (.) no we (.) the position of the
 MPs : *LAUGH**laughmuttermuttermuttermutter*
 1MP(O) : *GIVEN ENOUGH TIME*
 18PM : government will remain that we support the minimum wage and we look forward to
hearing a position from the party opposite

The fact that the Hansard does not represent the spoken language of the House of Commons accurately means that all the data for discourse analysis had to be transcribed from original recordings. It is possible for members of the public to watch debates from the 'Strangers' Gallery' within the House of Commons chamber (see Figure 4, p.93). This allows the observation of all the MPs in the debating chamber. However, whilst note-taking is possible in the Strangers'

Gallery, transcriptions must be made from televised debates on The Parliamentary Channel¹⁰ which broadcasts live from the House of Commons. I video-recorded approximately 60 hours of live debates from this channel between January 1998 and January 2001. Volume II of the thesis (Part A) consists of extracts of the video data used for the thesis¹¹. Appendix Three shows the exact composition of the data corpus, and indicates which speech events comprised the smaller corpus of debates and question times used in Chapters Five and Six¹². Figure 2 below gives a briefer summary of all the video and interview data used in the thesis. The 60 hour corpus was intended to be representative of all the speech events in the House of Commons. This was achieved by recording all the events occurring on a randomly selected day (for example on 01/07/98), or in one case most of the events occurring in a randomly selected week (between 01/03/99 and 04/03/99) so that all the different types of speech events would be included.

Figure 2: Summary of video and interview data.

A: House of Commons video data.	
Debates:	45.25 hours
Question Times:	13.6 hours
Total :	58.85 hours
B: House of Commons MPs Interview data.	
Six Interviews -	4.3 hours
C: Scottish Parliament video data.	
Debates:	8.5 hours
Question Times:	3 hours
Total :	11.5 hours

Having observed debates both from the Strangers' Gallery and using video data it is clear that video data is somewhat restricted in terms of its coverage of House of Commons events. From the Strangers' Gallery it is possible to see the whole chamber (apart from a small area immediately beneath the gallery¹³), the Speaker's chair, and to see and hear the MP giving the speech. It is also possible to see interactions other than speech making (such as conversations between MPs; MPs passing notes to each other; and MPs entering and leaving the chamber). The televised version of House of Commons events operates under

some restrictions and mainly shows the MP giving the speech (a head and shoulder shot); a zoom shot to identify an MP¹⁴; a wide angle shot (of the whole chamber); and a group shot (mid-way between the head and shoulder shot and the wide-angle shot) which is used to show the reaction of a group of MPs or to establish the geography of parts of the chamber (Heatherington et al. 1990: 10, see also the video extracts in Volume II, Part A). Initially, when the televising of proceedings was trialled in 1989, only the head and shoulder and wide-angle shots were permitted. Since 1990 (when the permanent broadcasting arrangements were approved) the main restrictions are that 'reaction shots' cannot be shown in Question Times, and that in times of 'grave disorder' the camera is required to focus upon the Speaker in the chair¹⁵. Visual coverage of the chamber is therefore restricted in that often only the main speaker is shown, and when the wide-angle shot is used it is not possible to identify who is speaking. This means that it is often impossible to identify speakers when they shout or speak out of turn (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.1., p.133). The sound recording for the televised debates operates by the use of microphones hanging from the ceiling in front of the MPs' benches. When an MP gives a speech the microphone in front of her/him is turned on and others in the chamber are turned off. Therefore it is not always possible to hear all the illegal interventions occurring in the chamber as some may be far away from an active microphone¹⁶.

There are many advantages in using televised data, despite these recording restrictions. The main advantages are the extent of the coverage on the Parliamentary Channel (all speech events are televised, not just the most important ones); MPs are identified by name and additional information about House of Commons procedure is shown by the use of captions on the screen; visual data (compared with audio data) also allows the analysis of paralinguistic features and facial expressions which facilitate accurate transcriptions, and inform interpretations.

Video data was also required for the comparative analysis of the Scottish Parliament in Chapter Eight of the thesis. The Scottish Parliament is only broadcast live on Scottish regional television once a week¹⁷. However, the broadcasting centre at the Scottish Parliament provided me with approximately

twelve hours of video tapes from debates and question times over four days (including one complete day's sitting on 14/12/00). The list of the speech events in this Scottish Parliament video corpus are shown in Appendix Four, p.364. The video data from the Scottish Parliament is different from the House of Commons data in that the shape of the chamber enables two people from different parties to be in the camera shot at the same time (See Figure 9 showing the layout of the chamber Chapter Eight, p.240). Apart from that, the restrictions upon broadcasting are the same as at Westminster, although the new Scottish Parliament buildings were designed with broadcasting technology. This means that, for example, the microphones and cameras are built into the desks and walls of the chamber (a full description of procedural differences between the two assemblies is given in Chapter Eight of the thesis).

The transcription of the video data from the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament needed to be of a suitable level for a CA analysis and the identification of an adversarial style in Chapter Five. Transcript 1 (above), which shows an exchange between the Speaker, Jane Griffiths and the Prime Minister, was transcribed in great detail in order to investigate the particular nature of the legal and illegal 'floors' in the chamber (see Chapter Five, 5.3., p.119). As the transcription scheme in Transcript 1 shows, this transcript is detailed in that it shows all the cheers, laughing and noise made by MPs in the background, as well as the audible 'illegal' interventions and the exchanges between the main speakers. However, this level of detail was not necessary for the subsequent analysis of turn-taking. This is partly because the turn-taking analysis focussed on debates rather than Question Times. In debates fewer MPs are present in the chamber and there is less background noise and fewer illegal interventions. The transcription scheme for the rest of the transcripts in the thesis is shown in Figure 3 at the end of this chapter.

The transcription conventions for discourse analysis (shown in Figure 3) are selectively based upon Gail Jefferson's notation scheme for CA (described in Atkinson and Heritage 1999: 159-166). However, both the nature of the speech event itself, and the quality of recorded material guided the process of selecting suitable features for transcription. For example, the symbol for overlapping

utterances is used rarely because debate turns are regulated, and (more typically than conversations) speaker change occurs with no gap and no overlap. Where interventions from the floor are made by MPs who are seated (either individually or collectively) this is shown by positioning the intervention directly below the main speaker's contribution (see Transcript 1). Similarly, in a CA analysis of conversations it is necessary to show timed pauses to identify 'transition relevance places' (the end of a turn, see Chapter Five, 5.2.2., p.117), with which to discriminate between inadvertent overlaps and violative interruptions (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). However, in debates this is not always necessary as the turns are far more restricted in that one speaker should speak at a time, and if they do not then this is automatically a violation of the debate turn-taking system (whether it occurs at a 'transition relevance place' or not). Timed pauses are therefore not always shown in the transcripts, but micropauses and word/syllable stress are shown as they help with the interpretation of the meaning of utterances. Paralinguistic features (such as laughing, smiling or gesture) and collective noises made by MPs (such as cheering or laughing) are shown in transcripts when they have a bearing upon the analysis (for example laughter is shown in the transcripts in Chapter Seven investigating humour). MPs are identified as 'CMP' (current MP) and 'IMP' (Intervening MP) in Chapter Five as this helps with the identification of legal and illegal turns, whereas in the rest of the thesis MPs are referred to by their initials.

3.5.2. Collecting and transcribing interview data

I interviewed six MPs between March 1999 and July 2001. Interviews lasted for between 35 and 55 minutes. The transcripts of the interviews are shown in Appendix 2 (p.312). A sample of interview data forms Volume II, Part B of the thesis¹⁸. Thirty-seven MPs were contacted by letter to the House of Commons, of whom 30 refused (either by letter or by failing to respond)¹⁹. One MP arranged an interview but later postponed it and then was unable to make another appointment. One of the difficulties of this research process is that access to MPs is highly restricted because they have little available time (Puwar 1997a: 1.1.), and because academic research was not a priority for some MPs²⁰. However,

although the rate of rejection of interview requests was high I found that the interviews I conducted gave me the information I required.

In the thesis I also refer to recent interviews with MPs that have been undertaken within other academic research projects. These include Nirmal Puwar's (1997b) sociological research into gender and political elites; the political research of Sarah Childs (2000) into the recruitment and representation of women MPs in Britain; and Clare Walsh's (2000) thesis on women in the public sphere. I also refer to interviews carried out by Linda McDougall (1998) for her populist book, *Women in Westminster*, which recounts experiences of women MPs²¹.

I selected MPs for interview because they appeared in the 60 hour data corpus and transcriptions for discourse analysis, and I wanted to ask them about specific events (for example Jane Griffiths in Transcript 1 above²²); Oona King (Chapter Five, Transcript 11, p.149); Eric Forth, Edward Leigh and Christopher Leslie (see Chapter Seven on filibustering, p.224); because I knew they were interested in women's issues (Harriet Harman and Jackie Ballard have experience of representing women in an official capacity for their parties); because MPs had been recommended to me by interviewees as in Interview A (Appendix 2, lines 563-564, p.323); because they have extensive or particular knowledge about speaking in the House of Commons (for example Dennis Skinner; Betty Boothroyd and Charles Kennedy); or because they represent my own home or work constituencies (Barbara Roche and Steven Twigg).

My aims in conducting interviews with MPs were as follows. First, to gain information about the conventions of the House of Commons in order to arrive at an ethnographic description of its norms and procedures. As stated above this is necessary as I am an 'outsider' in relation to this community. Secondly my aim was to check my own discourse analytic interpretations of House of Commons events with MPs and to remain open to the possibility of alternative interpretations. My third aim was to include as many subjects as possible within the research process so that the research reflects the experience of MPs as well as my own interpretations of speech events. These aims led me to choose a semi-structured interview format in which all the interviews (and the letter requesting

an interview) were initiated by a brief description of 'linguistic research into debates' without revealing any specific focus on linguistic variation according to gender. I did not disclose the focus of my research because my impression was that MPs would be less likely to grant me an interview if they were being interviewed about their experiences of being a woman in politics²³. This consideration over-rode the suggestion made by some feminist researchers that interviewers should disclose as much as possible about the research process to the interviewee in order to increase the amount of personal involvement in the interview (Oakley 1981). Another reason I did not disclose more about the research was that I started all the interviews with the same general question: 'Could you tell me about your experience of speaking in the House of Commons?'. In asking this question I was interested to discover which aspects of speaking were the most salient for the MP, and did not want them to only select experiences that they perceived to be relevant to my research topic.

As Puwar (1997a) also notes, while feminist methodologies are concerned with establishing a non-hierarchical friendly interview situation that leads to a full and close picture of women's experiences (Acker et al.1983), the asymmetrical power relationship between interviewer and interviewee in this research means that MPs have more power than the interviewer. However, little consideration has been given to situations in which the researcher lacks control over the interview as in the case of interviewing an elite group such as MPs²⁴. This means that where such power asymmetries are particularly evident 'the scenario of the friendly non-hierarchical research relationship can seem rather idealistic' (Puwar 1997a: 2.4). Furthermore, MPs are used to being interviewed by journalists where it is in the MPs' interests to be guarded about how much of their experiences they disclose. This can mean that 'habits bred in their daily conversations with constituents, journalist and lobbyists seem to persist in these quite different circumstances' (Williams 1980: 310).

My experience of interviewing MPs was extremely mixed in relation to both these considerations. With regard to status I found that with the two more senior women that I interviewed (Harriet Harman and Jackie Ballard), their powerful status in relation to my own was very noticeable. In the interview with Harriet

Harman (Appendix 2, Interview D, p.335) I found that she moved the topic towards her own concerns²⁵, and generally seemed to promote her own political profile. She was also less responsive to topic changes initiated by me, and finished the interview extremely abruptly when her assistant entered the room²⁶. However, Harman did make some comments to me 'off the record' and seemed willing to criticise her own party, which she may not have done in an interview with a journalist²⁷. In my interview with Jackie Ballard (Appendix 2, Interview B, p.324) I found that her choice of location was extremely public and I suspected that this was because she was concerned with creating a high political profile within the House of Commons at a time when she was running for the leadership of the Liberal Democrat party²⁸.

In contrast, my interviews with more junior MPs were much more relaxed and informal. In particular I found the interviews with the anonymous MP and Oona King²⁹ (Appendix 2, Interviews A and E, p.312 and 347 respectively) to more closely resemble the non-hierarchical, friendly interviews mentioned above. This is shown in the willingness of these MPs to answer questions and react to my own interruptions and requests for clarification; in their openness in admitting to the problems they have encountered; and the amount of time they were prepared to commit to the interview (in both cases I brought the interviews to a close). I also found that these MPs were self-deprecating in relation to the topic of speaking in the House of commons and were prepared to recognise my status as someone who 'knew' about this topic³⁰.

One of the main issues in feminist research raised by the relationship of the researcher to the researched, and one that is particularly complicated when 'researching up' (Wolf 1996: 2) is that of empowerment. Empowering research has been described as research conducted 'on, for and with' the people taking part in the research (Cameron et al. 1992: 22), and aims to empower a group of people by addressing the different ways that individuals taking part in research are positioned in relation to power through the research process itself. The way in which I write up and present my research is one dimension of power that I hold over MPs. In practically all other identifiable dimensions of power MPs hold more power than the researcher. MPs have far more status than an academic

researcher both within politics and in terms of more general social status, and they have more access to information and political networks of power within the organisation that I am investigating. As shown in my accounts of interviews given above, MPs also have control over the interview process itself in terms of access, time and topic control. This greater degree of status and power held by MPs means that a straightforward notion of the researcher empowering the researched is not possible: MPs are unlikely to look to a relatively powerless researcher to empower them.

The issue of empowerment is further complicated by the positioning of women MPs as possible subordinates within this CoP. Although more powerful than the researcher, women MPs (if viewed as subordinates to men MPs within this CoP) are themselves candidates for empowerment within the research process. However, in order to be empowering the research would have to have clearly definable benefits *for* this group, for example through raising awareness of women's position in this CoP (either for those taking part in the research, for all women MPs, or the wider public) in order to change their position. This research does not have such overtly political aims, as no such dissemination of information through publication has been integral to the research process. Benefits for women MPs are therefore only possible by-products of this feminist research project which aims to investigate the workings of language, gender and power within this institution.

Researching an elite group also limits the options open to the researcher with regard to empowerment because of the issues of access discussed above. If this research had been conducted *with* interviewees in a wholly collaborative way, the focus of the research would have been discussed with the MPs I interviewed. However, disclosing the focus and aims of the research would have reduced the likelihood I would have been able to interview MPs and gain their experiences. The research cannot therefore be described as being conducted 'with' the interviewees, however, it does aim to take into account the MPs' own interpretations and definitions and incorporate them along with my own into the thesis. Furthermore, largely due to the problem of gaining access to interviews

with MPs, the collaboration of MPs within the research is minimal as only six interviews were conducted.

For these reasons, this research cannot be described as directly empowering for women MPs, although they may benefit from understanding how interactional rules and conventions operate. As a consequence of the complexities of researching an elite group, it is best described as 'ethical'. This type of research can be described as 'research *on*' social subjects (Cameron et al. 1992: 13, emphasis in original), which aims to consider the interests of the people upon whom the research is conducted. My concern is to minimise any inconvenience to the MPs being researched; to acknowledge their contribution; and to respect their wishes with regards to anonymity³¹. Methodologically the thesis follows feminist research principles more in its use of reflexivity (discussed in section 3.2. above), than it does its relation to those being researched.

As mentioned above, the interviews were semi-structured and I started all the interviews with the same fairly 'open' question. During this 'open' part of the interview I asked supplementary questions for clarification, but generally followed the MPs' selection of the topic. This functioned to give the MPs control over the interview from the outset, and allowed me to gradually reveal more about my research as the interview progressed. This 'open' part of the interview usually lasted for about half of the interview time. Then I asked specific questions in order to gain information about the topics I was investigating (such as barracking; adversarial language; sexist behaviour; and the use of humour). I was aware that I asked these specific questions at the expense of a sustained, more spontaneous account of MPs' experiences. However, this was the only way I could ensure that I gained information about specific topics in a restricted time period³².

In transcribing the interviews I chose to transcribe the entire tape-recorded interview in order to represent the MPs' experiences and responses as accurately as possible. The large amount of data, and the fact that the interviews were not being used for specific discourse analytic purposes meant that I used a low-level orthographic transcription scheme. The transcription scheme for the interviews is

shown below in Figure 3. The transcripts do not contain orthographic punctuation, but include all hesitations, repetitions and utterances made by the MP. I transcribed all my main questions and interventions, but not my minimal responses, prompts or partial questions and non-verbal feedback. When the interview data is quoted in the main text of the thesis I have inserted impressionistic orthographic punctuation in order to make the extracts more comprehensible to the reader.

Information gained from the interviews is referred to throughout the thesis as it offers insights into both the interactional details of being a participant in the debating chamber; and also into the more general and wider experiences of MPs. Interview data is also integral to the ethnographic description of the House of Commons undertaken in the next chapter.

Figure 3: Transcription Conventions

<u>Transcription scheme for discourse analysis:</u>	
CMP = 'current' MP ;	IMP = intervening MP
MPs = A group of MPs	
f = female;	m = male
(C) = Conservative;	(L) = Labour
(LD) = Liberal Democrat	[] = utterances
(.) = micropause of under a second	overlapping with the line
(1) = timed pause in seconds	above
<u>underline</u> = emphasis on word or syllable	
[hear hear] = noises made by a group of MPs	
(laughs) = noises or gestures made by the CMP	
<u>Transcription scheme for interviews.</u>	
IN = first and second name initials of MP	
Q = Questions and comments made by the interviewer	
“ ” = reported speech	
(laughs) = paralinguistic or contextual information	
[-----] = indicates that 'off the record' or other comments have been removed	

Notes

¹ In particular androcentrism and sexism have been identified in relation to the conception of the 'scientific voice' as masculine; excluding the possibility that women could be *knowers* or agents of knowledge; and also that research questions are undertaken from a masculine point of view, and have tended to be about topics that concern men rather than women (Harding 1987: 3).

² I use a range of documentary sources in order to describe the procedures, rules and conventions of the House of Commons, in particular *Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* (1989).

³ Toren (1996: 102) notes that traditionally these descriptions were focused upon the lives of people who lived in, for example New Guinea, the Amazon, Africa, India and South East Asia.

⁴ I use the term 'ethnography of speaking' rather than 'ethnography of communication' because it is usually used to refer to Hymes' (1972a) descriptive 'SPEAKING' framework. Other modes of communication other than speech (in particular non-verbal and written communication) are significant in this context, and are accounted for in the description in Chapter Four and the analysis in chapters Five, Six and Seven.

⁵ This contrasts with other 'linguistic' approaches to discourse analysis in which the analysis relies upon a set of pre-determined hierarchical units of discourse (for example Discourse Analysis (DA) proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975))

⁶ These exchanges are used to identify the linguistic features that make up an adversarial style because they are thought to be the most adversarial of all House of Commons exchanges. This is discussed in Chapter Six, section 6.3., p.164.

⁷ The corpus of question times is identified in Appendix 3, p.361.

⁸ This turn-by-turn analysis also provided information on the total amount of turns taken by men and women in the corpus of debates for each speech event. This information is presented in Tables 2-5, Chapter Five, p.131-132.

⁹ This is published every day by Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO) and is also available online at: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmhn1196.htm>

¹⁰ This channel was available on cable and satellite TV until 2000, then the Parliamentary Channel was taken over by the BBC and became 'BBC Parliament'.

¹¹ A sample of twenty extracts is included on the video recording. These extracts all correspond to transcripts used in the thesis. I have shown which transcripts are included in this sample by writing 'video extract' against the title of the transcripts in the text of the thesis. It should also be noted that the picture/sound quality of the extracts has been affected by time, use, the transference from low-band to digital media for editing purposes, and the conversion of video tape from a 'long-play' to 'short-play' format (this particularly applies to extracts 5, 6 and 7).

¹² As indicated in Appendix 3, (p.361) the analysis of floor apportionment in House of Commons debates used 14.75 hours of data from five debates. Additionally, the total number of turns taken by male and female MPs in the whole 60-hour data corpus was also included (section 5.4.3., p.130). Chapter Six uses six hours of Question Times (from eleven events) in order to assess MPs' use of an adversarial linguistic style.

¹³ Areas 'B' and 'X' on Figure 4, p.93 are not visible from the Strangers' Gallery.

¹⁴ This shot also allows an MP to be shown in relation to his or her colleagues, for example it shows the Prime Minister in relation to his Ministers on the front bench (Heatherington et al. 1990: 88).

¹⁵ The main reason for these restrictions is the concern that broadcasters would select disorder and dramatic shots of MPs reactions over events that were more in the public interest to televise. This information is from the House of Commons Public Information Office Factsheet No. 40 *Broadcasting Proceedings of the House of Commons*.

¹⁶ It is worth noting here that it would be impossible to hear all interventions in the chamber from any position (including the Speaker's chair).

¹⁷ This programme is called 'Holyrood Live' and is broadcast on Thursdays to coincide with Executive and First Minister's Question Times.

¹⁸ One audio recording of an interview is included in Volume II. This is Interview C (with Jane Griffiths MP) – see Appendix 2, Interview C, p.329-334 The sound quality of this recording is poor because of background noise, but this was true of all the interviews as the MPs chose the setting.

¹⁹ Records of the MPs contacted and their responses are shown in Appendix 5, p.365.

²⁰ A number of MPs said that they refused all interview requests from academic researchers. One exception to this was the anonymous female Labour MP (see Appendix 2, Interview transcript A, p.312) who said she only gave interviews to academic researchers.

²¹ Linda McDougall's work, unlike the academic research cited in this section, does not account for interviewing methods or research practices. However, as the wife of a long-standing MP she has gained extensive access to MPs (she cites extracts from interviews with 92 women MPs), and therefore presents a wider range of opinions and experiences than is likely to be available to an academic researcher.

²² I did not ask Jane Griffiths directly about her question to the Prime Minister (Video extract one, Transcript 1). Although I gave her an opportunities to mention this occasion (for example see line 20 of the Interview transcript, p.329). However, I discussed Oona King's speech in the Stephen Lawrence inquiry debate (Video extract 5, Transcript 11, p.149) in Oona King's interview (Appendix 2, Interview E, p.347).

²³ A number of MPs I interviewed said they refused requests for interviews about this topic as they received so many requests. Puwar (1997: 5.1) also found this when interviewing women MPs. Even though I did not reveal that I was conducting research into language and gender, some MPs assumed this was the case. This is evident in Transcript A, line 109-10, p.314 when the MP mistakes my question about 'your agenda' as being related to 'your gender'.

²⁴ Puwar (1997a: 2.4.) also notes that feminist researchers have typically been concerned with 'researching down rather than researching up' in terms of asymmetrical power relations between interviewer and interviewee.

²⁵ This can be seen in Interview transcript D, p.335, where she directs the discussion towards the topic of Damilola Taylor (lines 159 and 224) and towards articles that she has written (line 105). Damilola Taylor was a child who was murdered in Harriet Harman's constituency in March 2001.

²⁶ Harriet Harman's responses to my interventions were often abrupt and dismissive, for example 'Well obviously..' (Transcript D, line 20); she refused my request to suspend the interview while the fire alarm was ringing (line 52); and she finished the interview in a way that clearly reinforced her status over my own (line 562).

²⁷ She may have been critical of the Labour Party because she was sacked as a minister in 1998.

²⁸ This impression was partly gained by her choice of location which was particularly unsuitable for an interview (being busy and noisy), and partly because she did not appear to be very interested in the topic and gave short answers to many questions. She also and broke off the interview twice to talk to MPs (Interview transcript B, p.324, lines 35 and 130).

²⁹ Oona King tried extremely hard to make me feel at ease and to answer my questions helpfully. This was partly due to the fact that she was extremely embarrassed that on a previous occasion she had forgotten to meet me for her interview appointment.

³⁰ In the case of Oona King I found that the status differential was reversed in places, in particular this is shown where she describes making a mistake in the chamber and she is so self-deprecating that I reassure her that she appears to be a 'good speaker' (Interview E; lines 80-85, p.349).

³¹ I asked all MPs if they would prefer to remain anonymous at the beginning of the interviews. One MP (Appendix 2, Transcript A, p.312) preferred anonymity. During some of the interviews MPs spoke 'off the record'. I have therefore removed their comments from the interview transcripts.

³² Puwar (1997a) also notes that interventions by the interviewer are necessary when interviewing MPs, and that researchers have had to devise ways of 'contesting elite inclinations to "just talk" – easily, freely and at length, but not necessarily to the issues in which the researcher is most interested (Ostrander 1994: 145, cited in Puwar 1997a: 8.2).

Chapter Four: The House of Commons in Context

4.1. Introduction

In order to contextualise the linguistic analysis I undertake in Chapters Five, Six and Seven of the thesis, this chapter aims to describe both the immediate and wider contexts within which House of Commons speech events occur. In section 4.2. I consider the general functions and characteristics of debates and question times, including a discussion of the adversarial or consensual nature of these forums. In section 4.3. I undertake an ethnographic description of the House of Commons according to Hymes' (1972a) SPEAKING framework, incorporating information from my own interviews with MPs.

4.2. An Overview of Political Speech Events

4.2.1. The characteristics and functions of speech in political assemblies

The characteristics of political speech events such as debates and question times are that they take place in the formal setting of an assembly; that they have particular legislative and political aims; they are governed by formal rules; and that debates follow a motion, discussion, and vote structure. The functions of speech events can be thought of in two ways, firstly in that they have a symbolic, formal and constitutional function within the political systems that they serve; and secondly the actual function they serve with respect to the power that they wield in the decision making processes of the government. The symbolic or formal function is clearly discernible; but it is more difficult to determine exactly how much power debates and question times have in the interplay of the complex procedures of meetings and committees involved with policy making and passing legislation. The following is attempt to identify the formal features and the actual functions of debates and question times, both generally and more specifically in the British House of Commons.

The primary function of debates can be seen as a representative one. The most detailed account of political debates from ancient times comes from Aristotle who wrote 'Rhetoric' in the 4th century BC. The emergence of political democracy in Athens was based on the assumption that all citizens had an equal right and duty to be involved in their own government. Public speaking was the way in which they could involve themselves effectively. Regular assemblies decided public policy where any (male) citizens could contribute to the discussion by speaking. The first function of debates then, whether in a participatory democracy like ancient Athens or in a contemporary liberal democracy (such as the UK) is to represent the people that the assembly serves.

The symbolic focus of the representation of a population is on the debating floor of assemblies. An assembly can be defined as a representative body that considers public issues (Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1998: 184). Its main function is to 'give assent, on behalf of the political community that extends beyond the executive authority, to binding measures of public policy' (Norton 1990: 1). The words used to refer to these bodies reflect different aspects of their representative role: 'assemblies' meet, 'parliaments' talk and 'legislatures' pass laws (Hague et al. 1998: 184).

The representative role of assemblies means that in authoritarian regimes, their significance declines. However, most authoritarian regimes still have some kind of assembly. In 1990 only 14 out of 164 independent states had no assembly, and of these 14 only the five dynastic states in the Arabian gulf had no experience of assemblies at all (Hague et al. 1998: 185) suggesting that 'Even authoritarian rulers value the appearance of public consent which assemblies provide' (Hague et al. 1998: 185).

Although parliaments have a representative function, they are not actually representative of the populations they are supposed to serve: 'in every democracy, the profile of parliamentarians is statistically unrepresentative of the wider society: no legislature is a microcosm of society. Reflecting wider patterns of political participation, democratic assemblies are still dominated by well-educated, middle-aged white men' (Berrington 1995: 429). Here then, the formal

representative function of parliament and debates can be seen as at odds with the reality of the extent to which it is actually representative of society.

Other formal functions of debates are to pass legislation and to authorise expenditure. In party-dominated parliaments Bills and laws sometimes pass through parliament without being at all transformed by the process, and the legislative function is reduced to 'quality control: patching up errors in Bills prepared in haste by ministers and civil servants' (Hague et al.1998: 191). Legislation is rarely the function where debates have most influence: 'Governments prefer to rule through more flexible devices: making regulations, establishing priorities and allocating money'(Hague et al. 1998: 191).

As well as authorising expenditure, another form of political control that parliamentary speech events exercise is the scrutiny of the government executive. The existence of emergency debates (which can be 'called' without having to be scheduled into parliamentary business in advance), and of parliamentary questions (where ministers can be questioned without preparing their answers) are two ways in which government policy can be scrutinised.

In a parliament like Britain's, where party politics is foregrounded, it could be claimed that the government 'Whips', and government policy-makers serve a more important function than the speech events themselves. In debates, party members are often expected to vote with their own party, and pressure is put on them by the Whips to do so. Therefore, debates often reflect the numbers of MPs elected to different parties in the last general election, rather than actually showing the number of MPs who personally support or oppose a particular motion.

One of the central functions of the debating chamber of many legislatures including the British House of Commons is to recruit, socialise, assess and train political leaders. In parliamentary 'talking' assemblies debates and question times can be a proving ground in which backbenchers make their mark:

The Commons' first function is weighing the reputations of men and women. MPs continually assess their colleagues as ministers and potential ministers. A minister may win a formal vote of confidence but lose status if his or her arguments are demolished in debate'. (Rose 1989: 172)

The debating arena then, is a very public one, in which politicians try to 'trip up' their opponents not only to undermine their political arguments, but also to make them personally appear disorganised or ineffectual. This public function of parliamentary debates has undoubtedly become more important since many assemblies have become televised. The audience of these debates has changed from a select band of politicians to a potentially nation-wide or even global audience. This means the 'point scoring' stakes are very high, especially in high profile debates and occasions (such as Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons), and the floor debate can be seen as part of a continuous election campaign.

4.2.2. Adversarial and consensual political styles.

The term 'adversarial' is used especially of parliamentary or legal systems in which two opposing sides 'fight it out'. Adversary politics was a phrase originally used by Finer (1974) in order to describe political party competition in Britain, which he saw as 'a stand-up fight between adversaries for the favour of the lookers-on' (1974: 22). A two-party system such as Britain's has been defined as one in which 'two parties of equivalent size compete for office, and where each has a more or less equal chance of winning sufficient electoral support to gain an executive monopoly' (Mair 1990: 420-2 cited in Hague et al. 1998: 142). In the case of Britain, the adversarial nature of debates and question times is enhanced by the fact that the two main parties physically face each other in a confrontational manner when engaging in debate.

Alternatives to adversarial styles are usually described as 'consensual'. Political styles that are more consensual typically have assemblies in which the format is designed to be non-confrontational in which members sit in semi-circles (as in the new Scottish Parliament discussed in Chapter Eight), or in rows facing the 'Speaker' or chairperson at the front as in the European Parliament in Brussels.

The effect of the physical layout of assemblies on the interaction that takes place within them will be considered in more detail in Chapter Five (on floor apportionment). However, the physical layout of the chamber sometimes does not intentionally reflect the nature of the political system itself. The layout of the British House of Commons is based upon the historical location of the British parliament in St Stephen's chapel between 1547 and 1843 when members sat in the choir stalls and the Speaker's chair was on the altar steps. This layout was replicated when the parliament moved to the present House of Commons.

The adversarial or consensual nature of a legislature is more often referred to through an account of particular practices and systems that make up the wider context of the government. In a contrastive study of adversarial and consensual styles of political decision-making, Kenneth McRae states that 'all systems of representative democracy are adversarial to some degree at certain points, for example at elections' (1997: 280). McRae identifies an adversarial (or majoritarian) style of democracy (exemplified by British and New Zealand parliaments), and the consensus style (exemplified by Swiss or Belgian parliaments). In this study, McRae uses Lijphart's (1968) classification of democracies into majoritarian and consensual categories in order to draw up a checklist of 'consensual elements' in six different European Parliaments. These elements include whether or not a government is two-party or multi-party; whether the electoral system is a system of proportional representation; whether there is executive power-sharing in high levels of government, and whether or not the government works under principles of devolution and special status for territories.

Another important factor in the style of a parliament is the role of committees, and the status and power they are given. In a 'talking assembly' such as the British House of Commons, the main activity is the floor debate, and most major issues are addressed in the main chamber. However, in a 'working assembly' such as the American Congress the main activities take place in committees (Hague et al. 1998: 189). It has been pointed out that 'when the political style is less adversarial and policy emerges through agreement, influential committees can coexist with strong parties. In the German Bundestag (lower house), party

discipline is firm 'but the committee members have more regard for objectivity than point scoring' (Hague et al. 1998: 189). Hague et al. also suggest that apart from party influence, the advantage of the committee lies in their expertise, and identify the four factors of specialisation, permanence, intimacy and support as being a gauge of a committee's success.

So although debates and question times can be thought of as intrinsically adversarial, it is the political system in which they exist that is largely responsible for the degree to which the practice exacerbates or diminishes this tendency. The degree to which a debate forum is adversarial can be viewed as stemming from four factors which are all inter-linked, and based on the discussion above: firstly whether or not it has the 'consensual' elements in the political system; secondly, the general 'culture' of competition or co-operation between MPs; thirdly the physical setting and procedures of the debate and fourthly the function of the debate, and the degree to which it has a 'point scoring' function above any legislative or regulating ones. According to these categories the House of Commons can clearly be described as an adversarial assembly. This thesis attempts to determine whether an identifiable adversarial linguistic style is used by MPs in the debating chamber, and how the use of this style varies between different MPs (see Chapter Six, p.186-207).

Although Westminster has long been held up as one of the world's most adversarial democratic political institutions, it is nevertheless in transition. Traditionally, Britain has been portrayed as a centralised, two-party system reliant on notions of parliamentary sovereignty. All these characteristics are currently being challenged: representation is changing as larger numbers of women MPs have been elected than ever before; the centralised nature of the government is put into question by new elected assemblies for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; Parliamentary sovereignty is lessened by interventions from the European parliament; and as discussed in Chapter 2, a select committee on modernisation has been established to bring in changes to working practices and legislative procedures (Seaton and Winetrobe 1999).

4.3. An Ethnographic Description of Speech Events in the House of Commons using Hymes' (1972a) SPEAKING Grid

4.3.1 Introduction

This description focuses on the rules, procedures and conventions (both formal and informal) of debates and question times in the House of Commons. It uses the categories proposed by Hymes (expressed by the 'SPEAKING' mnemonic presented in Chapter Three) as a guide to the type of components likely to be salient; and also differentiates between levels of interaction by using the hierarchical units of speech situation, event and act. Interactional micro-analyses of individual speech events at the level of what participants say are undertaken in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

The description that follows describes debates and question times as the main speech events within the House of Commons, and the focus of the CA study in Chapter Five, and the identification of an adversarial style in Chapter Six. As debates share many ethnographic characteristics with question times (for example the participants and situation) the following description can mainly be applied to both. The two speech events are therefore referred to within the same description below (sections 4.3.2-4.3.8). The 60-hour data corpus also consists of different types of debates and speech events¹ (such as Private Notice Questions and Private Members' Bills), which are described in section 4.3.9.

4.3.2. Situation

The situation is composed of the setting and the scene. The setting is about the physical circumstances of a communicative event, including the time and the place. The scene is the 'psychological setting' or the subjective definition of an occasion (Hymes 1972a: 58) and refers to the kind of speech event that is taking place according to cultural definitions.

The setting of these speech events is the debating chamber of the House of Commons. The layout of the chamber is shown in Figure 4 below. The debating

chamber is located in the Houses of Parliament at Westminster. The seating is arranged so that the political parties face each other in tiered rows of seats. There is seating for 437 MPs, so not all the 659 MPs can be seated at the same time. This reflects the fact that MPs only attend some of the debates, so the chamber is rarely full. When all MPs attend the chamber (for Prime Minister's Question Time or ceremonies such as the opening of parliament) those without seats stand behind the Speaker's chair, or sit in the gangway.

The focal point of the chamber is the Speaker's chair, which is raised in order to give the Speaker a good view of the whole chamber. The chair resembles a throne in its height, size and design, which reflects the absolute authority of the Speaker over the proceedings in the chamber. The Clerks of the House sit in front of the Speaker at the 'Table of the House'. On either side of the table are the Dispatch Boxes, where government ministers and senior opposition spokesmen make their speeches. The mace rests on the front of the table. The mace must be on top of the table when the House is in session. When the chamber is 'in committee' the mace is put below the table and the Speaker leaves the chair.

The MPs sit either side of the Speaker's chair. The government sits on the right hand side of the Speaker, and the opposition parties on the left. The Ministers sit in the front government bench, with MPs who act as their advisors behind them. Microphones are situated at regular intervals along the benches, and television cameras record the debates from fixed positions. Debates occur between 9.30 a.m. and 11.00 p.m. (or for as long as necessary through the night) between Monday and Friday when the House of Commons is sitting. Question times occur for about an hour between 2.30 and 3.30 on Monday to Thursday when the House is sitting, and fall into two categories, either Departmental question times or Prime Minister's question time. In Departmental question times (DQTs) the Ministers of particular departments (such as the Home Office; Foreign Office; Defence; Agriculture and Health) and her or his deputies answer questions from MPs in the chamber. Prime Minister's question time (PMQT) lasts for about 30 minutes and happens every Wednesday at 2.30.

Figure 4: The layout of the House of Commons debating chamber²

The scene, according to Hymes' definition, is the subjective definition of an occasion according to 'psychological' or cultural characteristics. The House of commons and the debating chamber have very strong cultural associations. It is the only place where British legislation can be passed and is therefore associated with law making and authority. It is the site of famous historical episodes that are strong in popular cultural consciousness (such as the 'Gunpowder plot' of Guy Fawkes in 1604). Interaction in the debating chamber is widely publicised (in particular exchanges between the Prime Minister and the 'Leader of the Opposition' in Prime Minister's question time) and is shown regularly on television news, and commented upon in the print media. This in turn, as well as party political divisions, fuels the public perception of the chamber as an adversarial forum in which there are winners and losers. The behaviour of MPs, in particular the cheering and shouting in Question Times contributes to the public perception of the chamber as a rowdy, eccentric forum that cannot be related to other professional and workplace experiences. Furthermore, MPs form an elite group, many of whom have strong public profiles and are famous for their political activities.

These cultural associations are evident in MPs' descriptions of their own feelings about being in the debating chamber for the first time. One woman MP states that:

It's incredibly daunting I think, not just because of who is there – if you've been interested in politics for most of your life then half your heroes are in there and so that is in itself daunting - but also that it is taped and possibly going out live on the TV as well and the eyes of the place are on you. (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 6-11).

Another MP speaks of the sense of importance that the physical setting gave her when she first arrived: *I just thought gosh there are six-hundred and fifty-nine people in Britain who are allowed to sit on these benches and to take part in one of these debates and I'm one of them, how can that be?* (Appendix 2, Interview E, lines 215-218). Whilst another speaks of the chamber as a nerve-racking place because:

You do have an enormous sense of history of the place when speaking, particularly for the first time. I think there are all sorts of cultures at work: there is definitely a very masculine culture; and there is a very adversarial atmosphere in a lot of debates particularly in Prime Minister's Question Time. (Appendix 2, Interview F, lines 3-6)

Jackie Ballard MP describes the House of Commons as:

An intimidating place to work because of its history and it is a strange building (...) coming in here it is all so awe-inspiring, and it is very strange in that sense as a place of work. And it is the whole bit about relationships with other MPs because on one level we're all doing the same job and we all have the same pressures and problems and we all have a lot in common but on another level we're all in different parties and we're opposing each other. (Appendix 2, Transcript B, lines 151-157)

Therefore the cultural perception of the House of Commons by its members and by the public is related to its importance as a legislative assembly and its history (which are both reflected in the physical appearance of the building); the adversarial nature of the party political system; and the behaviour of its members which is largely dictated by the conventions, procedures and rules that are described in the following sections.

4.3.3. Participants

This component describes who is taking part in the speech events, and includes information about the relative status of participants, as well as describing the directly observable traits of who is or is not present (Hymes 1972a: 45).

The Speaker of the House of Commons³ has responsibility for the observance of rules during the proceedings. The Speaker during the time in which data was collected for this thesis was Betty Boothroyd, and her two deputies were Michael Martin and Michael Lord⁴. The Speaker selects which MP speaks in a debate, and in which order. MPs appeal to the Speaker on 'points of order' when they believe that someone has contravened a rule. The Speaker must then decide whether to uphold the point of order (and to tell the MP in question to change the content or mode of their speech) or to reject the point of order and allow the speech to continue. The Speaker must also rule on whether a word or phrase used is

‘unparliamentary’ or not. The Speaker has the authority to eject members from the chamber if they do not comply with the rules of the chamber. Betty Boothroyd describes her job as being ‘something between a schoolmistress and a nanny’ (McDougall 1998: 179), reflecting the dual roles of disciplining MPs and making sure that they can be heard in debates (the role of the Speaker is discussed further in Chapter Five, 5.6., p.144).

The 659 Members of Parliament represent their constituents, their political party, and their individual political interests by speaking and voting in the House of Commons. The level of involvement of an MP in a debate will vary greatly depending upon their job within their political party, and the topic being discussed. The term ‘backbencher’ is used to refer to MPs who do not have a senior or ministerial role within the government or opposition parties, and who sit on the back benches of the chamber. The front benches in the chamber are occupied by senior ministers on the government side, and senior ‘shadow’ ministers on the opposition side of the chamber. Each political party has a leader who takes overall responsibility for the actions of the party. During the period of this thesis the Leader of the Labour party (and Prime Minister) was Tony Blair, the Leader of the Conservative Party was William Hague; and the Leader for the Liberal Democrats was Paddy Ashdown (until July 1999) and Charles Kennedy (after July 1999).

Another important role in the debating chamber is that of the ‘Whips’. The term Whip refers to the role of MPs elected by their party to serve in the Whips’ office⁵. Their role has three functions: firstly they are responsible for managing their party’s business in the House which involves ensuring that there are enough MPs present in the chamber and voting for each Bill. Secondly they are the government and party’s ‘intelligence arm’ (Davis 1997: 141), feeding views from backbench MPs to Ministers and back again. Thirdly they act as the government’s ‘personnel department’, monitoring MPs’ progress and recommending them for appointments (Davis 1997: 141). They therefore perform a powerful regulatory function inside and outside the chamber. Evidence of the extent of the involvement of the Whips in the debating chamber is given by MPs

I interviewed. Jane Griffiths speaks of Whips asking her to attend a debate late at night:

The Whips had said 'the chamber is ever so empty we need some support if you could try and be in there' so I went in there and I thought I could feel myself going (to sleep) and the Whip came and tapped me on the shoulder and said 'look if you can't stay awake you'd better leave the chamber because you are behind the next person who is going to speak and you'll be in shot'. They were nice about it, they didn't want it to look embarrassing. (Appendix 2, Interview C, lines 143-150)

Although nobody but the Speaker and MPs have the right to speak in the debating chamber; a number of other people can be present. These include members of the public (seated in the visitors' or 'strangers' gallery); advisors to Ministers (seated to the left of the Speaker's chair); clerks of the House and the Serjeant at Arms; members of the press in the press gallery; government officials; and invited guests of MPs.

4.3.4. Ends

The 'ends' of a speech event can be divided into outcomes (the purposes of an event from a cultural point of view), and goals (the purposes of the individual participants). The formal outcomes or purposes of political debates and question times have been discussed in section 4.2. above, and include representing the views of the people, passing laws, authorising expenditure and scrutinising the government executive.

The goals or purposes of individual participants are more difficult to assess. MPs are likely to have both personal goals and goals within their political party (or possibly their faction within a political party). Generally though, an MP will aim to show that their own political party is better than the opposition parties, and debates can be used as opportunities to show the leader, policies, and principles of a political party in a good light. An example of this is when backbench government MPs ask the Prime Minister about the success of government policies in Prime Minister's question time (PMQT). These questions allow the

Prime Minister to talk about particularly successful government policies, and therefore show the government's strengths.

Some MPs make a distinction between MPs who are in the House of Commons primarily in order to represent a constituency or a political issue, and those that are more 'careerist' and are interested in furthering their political career as their main objective. Ray Michie MP describes her own goals in these terms:

I didn't come here to be one of the glory boys. They love the power, they love being here. My aim was – much as I respect the place, and I think it is a tremendous institution – to take power from here and back to Scotland. (McDougall 1998: 177).

Another female Labour MP also makes the distinction between those who are 'aiming for high office' and 'ordinary constituency MPs' and the role that this plays in their participation in the chamber:

If you are aiming for high office then you've got speeches and you're delivering government policy but if you're an ordinary constituency MP then the skills are actually inter-personal skills of speaking to people one-to-one, doing the job, having empathy for your constituents, not about great oratory. (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 41-44)

Therefore individual goals of MPs may be to represent the particular concerns of their constituents, and resolve issues on their behalf. MPs may also have particular personal career aims, which may benefit from a notable and successful performance in debates and question times. It is also the case that some MPs attend the chamber simply because they are required to do so (often by the intervention of the Whips), they do not have individual goals beyond attending the debate to show their support for their party, and possibly voting accordingly.

4.3.5 Act Sequence

The act sequence component incorporates both the message form (how something is said) and the message content (what is said). The message form includes whether the language used is written or spoken, and whether any recognisable varieties are used.

The type of language used is mainly spoken, although written language plays an important part in written questions and the 'verbatim' Hansard report. The register of spoken language is formal, and strictly governed by convention. One of the functions of the Speaker is to ensure that 'parliamentary language' is used during the speech events. One of the most obvious conventions is that MPs must only address or refer to other MPs in the third person, according to the constituency they represent or the official office they hold, and not by using the pronoun 'you'. In this way, if Tony Blair is being referred to, he could be called 'The Prime Minister', or the 'Right Honourable Member for Sedgefield'. When MPs refer to a member of their own party, they use the phrase 'My (Right) Honourable Friend', and when addressing a member of the opposition party, they address them as 'the Honourable Lady/Gentleman'⁶. The reason for the use of these third person address forms is that all speeches are officially directed to the Speaker, rather than an opposition MP. This is intended to make speeches less confrontational and personal and to emphasise the Speaker's regulatory role. If an MP uses the wrong form of address the Speaker may intervene to correct her/him.

MPs single out using these linguistic conventions as being one of the most difficult aspects of speaking in the House of Commons: *The other thing that makes it (speaking) difficult is the arcane language and that is what makes you stumble, it does not trip off the tongue easily, 'My honourable friend the member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber'* (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 12-14). Oona King speaks of being censured by the Speaker on one occasion because she didn't address her speech through the Speaker (she is also censured for not using the correct address form – see Transcript 11, Chapter Five, p.149, and video extract 5). Although she says she can 'see the point of' not being able to use 'you' to address someone, she speaks of her frustration at being continually corrected by the Speaker:

I was giving a speech on speech and language therapy (laughs) aptly enough and I was utterly determined that my speech was not going to be interrupted by the Speaker on a procedural point at any time, so you know I was going 'do not say 'you', do not say 'you', at no point does the word 'you' come out of your mouth' you know it is like 'don't mention the war'

(laughs) you can't help it. But anyway, so I was fairly well through the speech and suddenly the Speaker goes 'order, order' and I just wanted to say 'why you stupid bastard?' (laughs) and I knew I hadn't said 'you' or anything like that and I sat down and I was literally glaring at him like that, and he goes 'the Honourable Member must speak through the Chair'. (Appendix 2, Interview E, lines 412-422)

As well as the strict use of address forms, and speaking through the 'chair', language can also be deemed 'unparliamentary' if one minister directly accuses another minister of lying. As discussed in Chapter Six on adversarial language, questioning the truth of an MP's claims is common practice in the chamber, but MPs are unable to accuse each other directly of lying intentionally. The rules for what is counted as unparliamentary language are written in Erskine May's *Treatise in the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* (1989). This is the official 'rule book' of the House of Commons. Copies of Erskine May's *Treatise* are kept in the chamber of the House of Commons for reference to formal rules during debate.

Apart from Erskine May's *Treatise*, the Hansard report is another way in which written language is used in debates (as mentioned in the discussion of the transcription of data in section 3.5.1.). As the official record of what is said in the chamber, the report is often quoted by MPs when referring to previous speeches, questions or statements. MPs can check their speech for accuracy and ask for it to be changed if there has been an error, but only if it doesn't change the sense of their speech (see Appendix 2, Interview E, lines 289-409, p.353). One MP I interviewed felt that corrections made to the 'verbatim' report did not accurately represent what she said:

I am having constant battles with Hansard I mean I go up when I have time and you can check your speech and they'll have me saying things like 'but has not the Minister realised that' you know and you think but I've never said that 'has not the Minister' you know, I don't say that, that is not what I say - 'I said hasn't, can't you change it? And they're like 'no, we have to have 'has not'. (Interview E, lines 289-294)

Part of the reason for this MP's concern at the way she is represented in the Hansard is because of the perceptions of people who read the speech:

It is just really infuriating – I know that a lot of people will sometimes pull your speech off the internet or whatever it is and you sound like a complete raving upper-class nutter. But the problem is that there is no objective measure the only measure is the Member's word. (Interview E lines 305-309)

On occasions an MP (or group of MPs) may appeal to the Speaker on the grounds that the Hansard report is inaccurate. This occurred once in the 60-hour data corpus I collected for this thesis⁷. On this occasion an MP had complained to the Speaker that the text of the Hansard report did not accurately reflect the Prime Minister's answer to a question on the early release of terrorist prisoners in Northern Ireland⁸. In response to this complaint, the Speaker reads the definition of a 'full report' from Erskine May's treatise as follows:

Which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves nothing out that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument. (The Hansard report: 22 June 1998: column 704).

The Speaker states that she has listened to the original audio recording of the reply and agrees that the Hansard is accurate. She also reads a letter from the editor of the Hansard which explains that certain words were omitted from the reply, but that the Prime Minister did not request this, and the editing was in line with Hansard guidelines. This episode shows the absolute authority of the Speaker and the editor of the Hansard in these cases, yet this authority usually relies on one person's interpretation of a spoken event. Furthermore, other features that may have a bearing on the meaning of an utterance (such as, for example, stress, intonation or gesture) are not represented in the final written report.

The message content of debates and question times consist of what is said. This includes the topic of the debate or question and also the act by act progression of the event. This will not be described here, as the micro-analyses of individual events will be undertaken in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

4.4.6. Key.

The 'Key' refers to the manner or spirit in which a speech event is carried out, for example, whether it is serious, sarcastic, or jovial. Political debates are serious and adversarial. However, this serious key is often manipulated and humour and irony occur frequently. The manipulation of the serious key of debates is discussed Chapter Seven.

4.4.7. Norms of Interaction and Interpretation.

Norms of interaction include all the formal and informal rules or procedures for the use of speech which are applicable to the speech event. These rules can include the formal procedures governing the interaction, which describe how people 'should' behave in an 'ideal' speech event and may also be descriptive of typical behaviour (Saville-Troike 1989:154). Rules may also be informal or even unconscious, which means that they may only be identifiable by reactions to their violation by others. The rules below are described in two categories; the first is a description of the formal rules for a debate, which can also be found in Erskine May's Treatise.

As mentioned in the previous section, Erskine May's Treatise is a large volume containing all the rules and procedures of the House of Commons. Although it is the point of reference for 'points of order', there appears to be some gap between the 'letter' and the practice of the rules. For example, Erskine May states that there must be no talking from other MPs when a designated MP is speaking. This is never observed, and 'barracking' (see below and Chapter Five, 5.5.2.1., p.141) and shouting is a part of the everyday life of the House of Commons. It seems then, the reality of what happens in the House of Commons evolves independently of the formal rules that are supposed to dictate proceedings. The second category (section 4.3.7.2. below) is that of informal rules that are adhered to but are not formally prescribed.

Section 4.3.7.3. (below) concerns norms of interpretation. These norms refer to 'reading between the lines' of the formal and informal rules, and attempt to

describe what is meant by certain words or actions in the speech event. Political debates have many norms of interpretation because participants are always trying to stretch and exploit the formal rules for their own advantage. The informal rules and the norms of interpretation can be seen as describing the tactics used by speakers to strengthen their own political positions. Norms of interpretation and interaction are extremely important in analysing the meaning of House of Commons events. For this reason, some of these norms are described in greater detail in other chapters of the thesis concerned with particular topics (such as floor apportionment in Chapter Five, adversarial language in Chapter Six, and filibustering and humour in Chapter Seven).

4.3.7.1. Norms of interaction: Formal Rules

As mentioned above, the Speaker of the House of Commons has absolute authority. Many of the formal rules reinforce this authority. Ministers must bow to the Speaker's chair when entering and leaving the chamber. MPs address all their comments to the Speaker, formally using the address term 'Madam Speaker' at the beginning of their speeches or interventions. When the Speaker is standing up all other members in the chamber must sit down. An MP must be selected to speak by the Speaker, and the MP must speak from a standing position. Only one MP should be speaking (and standing) at any one time.

One MP (Julie Morgan) expresses how difficult she finds these sorts of rules:

You never know when you'll be able to speak, and you have to sit for hours and hours waiting. You go in and you are supposed to bow to the Speaker. I really dislike doing that, and find it an odd thing to do. Very peculiar to bow to people as you go into a room. And then, when you leave, you are supposed to leave in a certain way. It's all these things that I feel are difficult to live with. (McDougall 1998: 176-177)

The Speaker (or one of her two deputies) starts a debate by reading the motion from the printed 'order paper'. The MP who is responsible for proposing the motion, or who is responsible for the particular Bill begins the debate. The Speaker then selects an MP from the opposite side of the house who has indicated that they would like to speak. MPs show they would like to contribute to the debate by standing up when the previous contribution to the debate has finished

(signalled by the MP who is giving the speech sitting down). The Speaker calls upon MPs from alternate sides of the house to contribute to the debate, usually giving priority to the more senior MPs in the front benches.

An MP contributing to a debate may be asked to 'give way' by another MP at any time when they are speaking. An MP asks another to give way by rising from their seat and holding out their hand. The MP who is speaking can decide whether or not they give way to the challenging MP, yet the accepted convention is that a speaker does give way. If the MP decides to give way, they sit down, and listen to the intervention by the challenging MP.

The Speaker intervenes in the debate if she believes that a rule has been broken. One of the most important roles is to maintain 'order' in the house, and especially to ensure that members have an equal and fair chance to speak. The Speaker ensures that when giving a speech in a debate, an MP is not 'drowned out' by other MPs 'barracking'. A detailed analysis of interventions (including giving way, barracking and interventions by the Speaker) is the focus of the discussion in Chapter Five.

The Speaker can also enforce 'order' by calling upon an MP to make his/her contribution relevant to the debate. This is particularly important when MPs are deliberately wasting time (filibustering - see section 4.3.7.2. below). MPs can also appeal to the Speaker on a 'point of order'. If an MP believes that an MP giving a speech has breached a rule they can signal to the Speaker that they have a point of order. The Speaker then stops the debate and listens to the 'charge'. If she agrees on the point of order she can instruct the MP giving the speech to stop what they are doing. If she rules that there is no merit in the point of order, then the debate carries on as before.

'Closure' is a measure introduced into parliament as an attempt to stop the deliberate obstruction of parliamentary business. After a Bill or motion has been debated for some time, an MP may rise and say 'I beg to move that the motion be now put.' The Speaker then decides whether the debate has carried on for long enough to warrant its closure. If she agrees, the closure motion is voted upon

without debate. If it is passed, and provided that at least 100 members voted for it, then the House immediately votes on the 'original question'. An extension of the closure rule is the 'guillotine', which refers to the rule that states a Bill must be debated within a particular scheduled timetable. The House votes on the motion even if all the clauses of the Bill have not been debated in the allotted time, rather than waiting to debate them all. This is to avoid situations in which a particularly contentious Bill takes up all the available parliamentary time. The Speaker can also limit the length of debates by selecting which amendments or clauses should be discussed. This device is known as the 'kangaroo'.

Votes in the House of Commons are called 'divisions' because MPs vote by physically dividing into two groups. At the end of a debate, the Speaker 'puts the question', or asks MPs to decide whether they agree or disagree with the motion of the debate. If the debate is not controversial the question is carried without MPs voting. If the Speaker hears people agree (by shouting 'aye') and disagree (by shouting 'no'), she declares that the 'ayes have it' or 'the noes have it'. If any MP shouts 'no' then the Speaker calls a division by saying 'clear the lobby'.

When this happens, division bells ring in all parts of the Palace of Westminster. MPs only have eight minutes to get into the lobby to vote. The MPs vote by walking through the 'aye' or 'no' lobby, which are at different ends of the chamber. Eight minutes after the division bells ring the doors to each division lobby are locked. The MPs are counted as they pass out of each lobby. When all MPs have voted the number of votes in each lobby is reported to the Speaker, who announces the result. The names of the MPs voting in each lobby are recorded and printed in the Hansard report.

This voting system is unpopular with some MPs, such as Jackie Ballard:

So far there's been over four hundred, five hundred people squashed in a very narrow corridor for twenty minutes, half an hour breathing on top of each other. And the idea that this is a good opportunity to lobby Ministers is rubbish. You're like sardines. The sooner we have a sensible electronic voting system the better. (McDougall 1998: 172-3).

However, other MPs believe that it is important to be able to speak to other MPs face-to-face while voting, and that an electronic voting system would not work:

In this place you get tired, you get confused. You need to be in the lobby so that you can meet people and lobby Ministers. You can always go there and say 'I've written to your office three weeks ago and I have had no reply'. If all they have got is a switch card, they'll be out of the lobby in next to no time' (Llin Golding MP in McDougall, 1998:173).

Question time sessions have no voting component, and consist of MPs asking questions of the Prime Minister or departmental Ministers. Question times allow all MPs an opportunity to ask government Ministers or the Prime Minister questions about policies and activities in their departments. There are three types of questions asked: oral questions; written questions; and questions for written answer on a named day. Oral questions are answered in the chamber of the House of Commons, written questions receive written responses, and questions for written answer on a named day must be answered in at least two days. An oral question must be submitted two weeks before an answer is given, so the Minister has time to prepare the answer. However, for each question asked a number of supplementary questions are added, for which no notice is given. The MP asking the question usually submits a general question first (which receives a general, prepared answer), and this is followed up by more detailed supplementary questions. In this way MPs hope to surprise the Minister or Prime Minister by asking them complicated questions for which they have had no opportunity to prepare. The spontaneous element to question time means that it is an extremely high profile event, often gaining much coverage in the media

PMQT is extremely well attended by MPs and appears to be regarded by MPs as the time in the week when political allegiance and support are publicly shown. In PMQT the leader of the opposition (William Hague) is called to ask a question first, and he is usually guaranteed two questions with two or three supplementary questions each. The leader of the Liberal Democrats is called and he asks one or two supplementary questions. Then other MPs (selected by the Speaker) ask their questions, but are not usually granted supplementary questions. In PMQT the questions must be phrased in such a way that MPs only ask the Prime Minister

about areas for which he is directly responsible. Questions cannot be about the conduct of the opposition parties. It is the phrasing of questions which leads to many MPs reading out their questions (and the accusations of ‘reading’ discussed in section 3.3.7.2. below). An example of an occasion in which an MP wrongly phrases a question for PMQT is shown in Transcript 1, Chapter Three, p.72.

4.3.7.2. Norms of interaction: informal rules

‘Filibustering’ is the most common way of obstructing the business of parliament whereby an MP attempts to ‘talk out’ a Bill by making their speech as long as possible. If the MP talks for long enough, the subject being debated is deemed not to have received adequate consideration and therefore cannot be voted upon. If a Bill is filibustered at every stage in the process, eventually it has no more time in which to be debated and is therefore ‘thrown out’. Recent examples of filibustering include the Private Member’s ‘Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs)’ Bill proposed by Michael Foster MP which was debated between 9.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. on March 6th 1998 when the debate was adjourned without a vote as there was no more available time. Occasionally a Bill may be filibustered simply as a means of stopping another Bill being debated later in the day. Examples of filibustering in the 60-hour data corpus are analysed in Chapter Seven.

Although officially only one person is supposed to speak at a time in the House of Commons, this rarely occurs. MPs support each other’s statements by shouting ‘hear hear!’. MPs are not allowed to applaud in the House of commons, but use shouting to show their support for their colleagues. This can also have the added function of letting the MP who is speaking know how their speech is being received by the ‘audience’ of MPs. Janet Anderson MP, who has worked as a government Whip, says: *‘When you’re making a speech from the Dispatch Box, you’re facing the opposition, and unless there’s some kind of noise coming from behind you, you have got no way of knowing what the reaction from the other side is.’* (McDougall 1998: 180).

MPs also attack each other verbally with shouts of derision as well as specific verbal attacks (for example: ‘Rubbish!’, ‘You don’t know anything!’). These attacks can be extremely personal and abusive, such as ‘stupid woman’

(Appendix 2, Interview A, line 527). These verbal attacks are referred to as 'barracking', and are an accepted part of the proceedings of the House of Commons. According to the formal rules, the Speaker should silence MPs if they talk 'out of turn', but this only happens when the noise is extremely loud, and a great deal of barracking, muttering and shouting occurs without the Speaker attempting to intervene. MPs' attitudes towards barracking and an analysis of the participation of MPs in this rule-breaking activity are investigated in Chapter Five.

3.3.7.3. Norms of interpretation

The norms of interpretation of a speech event are an assessment of the ways in which formal and informal rules of interaction are typically interpreted by the participants. For example, in debates, challenges to 'give way' can be supportive, where MPs (usually belonging to the same political party as the MP giving the speech) can supplement information or add points that strengthen the speech being made. Challenges to give way can also have a detrimental effect on the speech being given, where MPs (usually from opposing political parties) interrupt the MP giving the speech in order to challenge the validity of what they are saying, to highlight or point out a mistake that has been made, or to prolong the proceedings (see discussion of give way interventions in Chapter Five, 5.4., p.125).

The interpretation of an MP calling for a point of order is not straightforward as this intervention can be used for tactical advantage in a number of ways. Sometimes MPs claim to have a point of order when they actually want to express a particular opinion, or to stress a mistake that the MP giving the speech has just made. In these cases, the point of order can be bogus (in that the MP has no intention of making a complaint about procedure), but the MP still has an opportunity to air an opinion, or to criticise or expose an opposing MP. Points of order can also be used to waste time (or filibuster), or to sabotage a speech with constant interruptions and therefore reduce its impact.

The way in which an MP makes a speech is likely to be interpreted in particular ways by fellow MPs. By convention, speeches and in particular questions in

Prime Minister's or Departmental question times are not scripted or read out from notes. In 1997, because there was such a large Labour landslide victory in the election, there were many new Labour MPs who wrote down questions in order to be sure they used the correct conventions, and who read them from their notes in the chamber. The response of MPs to this was to shout 'reading' at them. This is an insult because the implication of an MP reading a question or speech is that they have been given the question by a senior member of the government to read in order to show the government in a good light. A Labour MP describes this:

Well it's all part of the media hype of the the you know the government's having planted questions so it fulfils that stereotype the media have because it's because you're reading it so it's not your own words – that's why you're reading it, but what it actually means is that someone doesn't quite have the confidence or who got it wrong last time and who wants to make sure. (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 293-298)

In this case then, it appears that Conservative MPs are reacting to the media's portrayal of new Labour MPs and particularly women MPs as sycophantic.

4.3.8. Genre

The final component is that of genre, which Hymes describes as 'the patterns of sonnets, sermons, salesmen's pitches and any other organised routines and styles' (Hymes 1972b: 23). In this case the genre of the speech event is parliamentary debates and question times.

4.3.9. Different types of House of Commons speech events

This section aims to briefly describe the differences between the main types of House of Commons speech events, many of which appear in the 60-hour data corpus (shown in Appendix 3, p.361). These speech events follow the same interactional rules and procedures as described above, but have some particular functions and constraints. Debates can be grouped into two categories: those that involve legislation and those that do not. The process of bringing in new legislation involves debates at different stages. The First Reading is where the

Bill is presented to the House, and the motion is put forward that 'the Bill should be read'⁹. Usually this stage is a formality and no debate takes place. The Bill is then made available to MPs before the Second Reading takes place (usually about two weeks later). The Second Reading of the Bill is usually the occasion for major debate on the principles of the Bill (Davis 1997: 86), and lasts for at least one day. If the Bill is accepted by the House it goes on to be discussed by a standing committee, who suggests amendments to the Bill. This is followed by a 'report stage' debate on these amendments. Then the Bill goes through a Third Reading, which (like the First Reading) is usually a formality before the Bill is debated in the upper house, the House of Lords. Members of the House of Lords either accept the Bill or propose amendments, which are then debated in the House of Commons. If the House of Commons MPs reject the Lords' amendments a committee is set up and a report on the basis of the disagreements is sent back to the House of Lords. If the Lords are insistent upon their amendments, the Bill is passed back to the Commons for consideration until agreement is reached¹⁰.

Debates that do not involve introducing new legislation take two forms: substantive motions and adjournment motions. Substantive motions are those that involve a particular opinion or viewpoint. These motions can be put forward by the government or the opposition, and twenty days are set aside in each parliamentary session for opposition substantive motions¹¹. The second type of non-legislative motion is the adjournment motion. These debates occur frequently and last for thirty minutes. A government Whip usually moves the motion then a backbencher speaks for about fifteen minutes on a topic relating to the motion, before the appropriate government minister replies. Unlike other debates, the adjournment motion ends without a vote (the House is adjourned)¹². Adjournment motions are typically about very specific subjects and are mainly used as a way for MPs to get their statements 'on the record' (Davis 1997: 72).

Private Member's business can either consist of Private Members' Bills (legislation) or substantive Private Member's motions. The proposals for private member's business are made by individual MPs without the backing of the government or opposition parties. Private Member's business is selected by a

ballot at the beginning of the parliamentary session, and the motions selected are debated on Wednesday mornings. Controversial private member's Bills (such as Michael Foster's 'Wild mammals (Hunting with dog's) Bill mentioned above) are very unlikely to be passed (Davis 1997: 100), as filibustering is common, and in some cases fewer than the required number of 100 MPs attend the debate. A second way that MPs can introduce private motions is through the 'Ten Minute Rule Bill' in which an MP puts a motion by speaking for ten minutes, and an opposition spokesperson then responds for a further ten minutes. The question is put to the House and if it is not defeated the proposal can proceed through the legislative process. Like the adjournment motions, MPs proposing a ten minute rule Bill often do not expect their proposals to become law, but see this as an opportunity to raise concerns and put their views across.

Private notice questions (PNQs) are another way in which an individual MP can raise specific concerns. This allows MPs an opportunity to raise urgent questions with little notice (they must apply to the Speaker by midday in order to ask a question in the afternoon sitting). If the Speaker considers the question to be sufficiently important and urgent, she informs the relevant government department, and the MP can ask the question immediately after the question time session in the afternoon.

Question Time sessions (as mentioned in section 4.3.7.1.) fall into two categories, either Prime Minister's Question Times (PMQTs) or Departmental Question Times (DQTs). DQTs are held for each government department in turn, with the Minister and junior Ministers from a particular department responding to questions every two to three weeks. The Leader of the House is also allotted a question time session in order that the 'Business of the House' can be scrutinised. This includes such matters as the allocation of parliamentary time to particular legislation, and any questions about the procedural details of the House. Additionally, the Leader of the House in 1998 (Anne Taylor) was also responsible for the modernisation committee, and parliamentary time was set aside for questions about the progress of parliamentary reform. Other speech events in the 60-hour data corpus also include statements made by the Prime Minister, Departmental Ministers or the Speaker on specific topics. These are

usually announcements about new government policies (for example Harriet Harman's statement on the Child Support Agency on 6th July 1998), or government statements about current events (for example Mo Mowlam's statement on the situation in Northern Ireland on 2nd April 1998 – see Appendix 3 p.361).

Notes

¹ The full list of speech events within the 60-hour corpus is shown in Appendix 3, p.361

² This diagram is from the House of Commons *Guide for Visitors to the Galleries*. The information office at the House of Commons informed me that I did not need permission to reproduce this diagram in my thesis. This also applies to the diagram for the Scottish Parliament, Chapter 8, Figure 9, p.240, from the *Guide to the Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber*.

³ The Speaker and her deputies are MPs who are elected to their positions by MPs in the House of Commons.

⁴ Michael Martin and Michael Lord's official titles are First and Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (respectively). Michel Martin took over as Speaker when Betty Boothroyd retired in 2001. The role of the Speaker and her deputies are discussed further in Chapter Five, 5.6., p.144.

⁵ Thirteen MPs serve in the government Whips' office, nine in the conservative (opposition) Whips' office, and in the other parties there is usually one MP who is a Whip, although they may have a number of assistants.

⁶ An MP is addressed as 'right honourable' rather than 'honourable' when they are a Privy Councillor.

⁷ This occurred on 22nd June 1998 (see Appendix 3, p.361: House of Commons data).

⁸ This question and response occurred on 6th May 1998.

⁹ Before the First Reading, the Bill has been presented as a consultative document to MPs (the Green Paper), and then the results of this consultative process are published in the White Paper, which is essentially a statement of government intentions (Davis 1997: 84).

¹⁰ Once the content of the Bill has been agreed by both Houses, it receives 'Royal Assent', becomes an act of parliament, and has full legal authority.

¹¹ An example of a substantive government motion in the 60-hour data corpus (Appendix 3) is that on Trade Union Recognition (06/04/98), and an example of an opposition substantive motion is that on Sierra Leone (02/03/99). Time set aside for substantive motions includes the 'Allotted Estimates day' debates, for example the Government motion on their proposals for Further Education (06/07/98).

¹² Another difference between adjournment debates and other debates is that MPs usually give notice (to the MP giving the speech and the Speaker) if they intend to make a 'give way' intervention (see Jane Griffiths' interview: Appendix 2, Interview C, lines 212 – 223. p.333).

Chapter Five: Floor Apportionment in Debates

5.1. Introduction

Gaining the floor has often been viewed by analysts as a way of gaining control over a scarce resource, an 'economy' in which, depending on the context, 'turns are valued, sought or avoided' Sacks et al. (1974: 701). Although the metaphors of scarcity and a competitive economy may misrepresent the nature of ordinary conversations (Edelsky 1981: 401), they seem appropriate for an adversarial debate in which the debate turns are strictly regulated and the debate floor is sought after for both political and professional gain. In this chapter, the control that an individual MP has over the limited resource of the debate floor is assessed. The extent to which an MP occupies the debate floor as evidenced by linguistic exchanges is viewed as one element that contributes to the extent to which an MP has power in debates. This definition of power as an MP's control over the resource of the debate floor is related to a set of attributes that contribute to an MP's status and which allow MPs to access that power.

One of the attributes that may contribute to an MP's status and therefore the extent to which they can access power in debates may be gender. In Chapter One (section 1.2.3.) above it was suggested that in formal public arenas men are more likely to gain and hold the floor and to speak for longer than women, whereas women 'leave the floor to men' (Holmes 1995: 193). In this context linguistic practices which involve taking, holding and yielding the floor may be one of the ways in which men's and women's terms of participation vary in this CoP.

In pursuing the argument that women and men have differential access to the debate floor, I will propose an account of the relationship between gender, status and power in debates as well as definitions of the interactional features of debates such as speaking 'turns' and 'the floor'. The ways in which male and female MPs occupy the floor are analysed in sections 5.4. and 5.5., and models of interaction are proposed for legal and illegal interventions in debates. In section 5.6. the interventions made by the Speaker are analysed in order to establish how the regulatory role of the Speaker affects the power of MPs in debates.

5.2. Floor Apportionment, Turn-taking and Interruption as a Marker of Dominance in Spoken Interaction

5.2.1. Power in debates

Henley (1977) defines power as ‘based on the control of resources, and their defense’. One key resource over which MPs have more or less control in debates is the debate floor (see section 5.3. for a discussion of the debate floor). The main way in which MPs have control of this resource is by gaining speaking turns. In this section the factors affecting whether MPs access the floor in debates are identified, and the relationship between an MP’s status, gender and power in debates assessed.

Firstly, the differential status of MPs relates to their party affiliation. MPs belonging to the government party have political power in that they devise and bring about changes in legislation, whereas opposition parties do not. In the case of the Labour government elected in 1997 the government (Labour) party also has more power than opposition parties because it occupies a large majority of seats within the house of commons. Therefore if MPs are loyal to their party the government’s vote outnumbers those of the opposition parties. Although belonging to the government party rather than the opposition gives MPs more political power, it does not follow that government MPs have more power in terms of gaining a turn in debates. The strict control of speaking turns in debates ensures that although a member for the government may initiate or introduce a debate, this will be followed by contributions from the other political parties. This serves to ensure that no party dominates the debate floor. Belonging to the Labour Party rather than an opposition party can therefore be viewed as a relatively powerful political position, but one that does not directly affect an MP’s control over linguistic resources in debates.

MPs also differ in status within their own party. Within the government the Prime Minister has overall control, Ministers are responsible for particular areas of government, and backbench MPs have no specially designated responsibilities. The Leader of the opposition, the shadow cabinet and opposition backbenchers

mirror the structure of the government's hierarchy but can only affect legislation by opposing the government's proposals. Within each party Ministers speak more than backbenchers. Ministers are allocated speaking turns in advance of debates, in particular to introduce or sum up the government's position. As discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.3.7.1. (p.103), backbenchers are often unable to secure speaking turns in advance of a debate and must compete with others for a turn by signalling to the Speaker that they wish to speak. When they are selected the debate has often progressed for most of its allotted time, obliging the Speaker to limit the length of backbench speeches to 15 minutes. Both government and opposition Ministers therefore have more access to the debate floor than backbench MPs in that Ministers are more likely to secure a speaking turn, and can often speak for longer. The distinction between Ministers with particular responsibilities and backbenchers is a relatively clear status differential, and therefore can be taken into account in the analysis of debate turns (see section 5.4. below on giving way).

Apart from the distinction between Ministers and backbench MPs, there are also less formal aspects of status that contribute to the amount individuals speak in debates. For example some MPs who have been in office for a number of years have more opportunity to speak in debates than newly elected MPs. This is partly because MPs with more experience of debates understand the procedures better than newly elected MPs, and so may be able to use this knowledge to gain the Speaker's attention more effectively. The ability of an MP to secure a speaking turn may also rest on a number of other factors including the relationship of the MP to the Speaker; their reputation as a particularly good orator; or the fact that they have previously held a position of high status. It is possible to assess the relative seniority of MPs by the length of time they have held office, but it is more problematic to assign MPs to categories of seniority according to subjective categories such as reputation. The factors affecting whether an MP has access to more or less power as a participant in debates are therefore: gender; professional status (Minister or backbencher); and length of time in parliament.

The question of the relationship between gender, power and status is investigated in the course of the analysis of the data presented in this chapter. There is some

evidence to suggest that gender may be a more salient variable than occupational status in contributing to an individual's control of the floor. Woods (1989) examined the patterns of floor apportionment and interruption in groups of three higher and lower ranking women and male colleagues to determine the relative influences of gender and occupational status on patterns of interruption. She found that gender-based interruption patterns overrode variables of occupational status. Although this study was carried out in an office setting rather than a debating chamber, there are reasons to suppose that the context of the debating chamber will prove to be one in which gender is a particularly salient variable. This saliency depends upon a mixture of factors including the fact that traditionally women have not been significantly represented in the House of Commons, and this imbalance has been greater than in most professions. As discussed in Chapter Two, the norms of interaction can therefore be interpreted as masculine norms (Kendall and Tannen 1997: 86) because men have invented them. It has been suggested that the norms of men's discourse styles are institutionalised and that they 'are not only seen as the better way to talk, but as the only way' (Lakoff 1990: 188). Men's discourse styles are institutionalised as ways of speaking with authority, and institutions are 'organised to define, demonstrate and enforce the legitimacy and authority of linguistic strategies used by one gender – or men of one class or ethnic group while denying the power of others' (Gal 1991: 188). If it is the case that men and women occupy the debate floor in different ways, and given the possible predominance of male discourse styles in institutions, the question arises as to whether women are under pressure to conform to androcentric working practices and the linguistic styles typically associated with men (Coates 1998: 296) in order to accrue power in debates.

Having identified some ongoing research questions about the relationship between gender, power and status with respect to floor apportionment, we may now turn to the relationship between the power of a participant and their control of the turn-taking system in debates.

5.2.2. Floor apportionment, turn-taking and interruption

Research on gender differences in spoken language has suggested that men interrupt women more than the reverse in mixed sex interaction (Swann 1989; Zimmerman and West 1975). The explanation given for this finding is that men are more likely than women to dominate and control conversations, because men have more status and power than women. However, a review of research projects on gender and interruption (James and Clarke 1992) shows that out of 32 studies that investigated interruptions in mixed sex conversations, 17 of them found no significant differences in the frequency of interruptions by women and men.

The variability in the findings of these studies may be partly explained by the fact that the projects took place in different contexts (formal, informal, professional and private). Different speech events have different constructions of power, status and interactional norms. Furthermore, researchers use different definitions and classifications of interruptions in different projects. Some researchers classify all instances of overlapping or simultaneous talk as an interruption and a marker of dominant behaviour. However, it has been recognised that two people speaking at the same time does not necessarily constitute dominant behaviour by the person who intervenes. Coates (1989) and Edelsky (1981) have shown that overlapping speech may represent a supportive or collaborative intervention designed to encourage a speaker and maintain a turn, rather than to take the floor.

In order to distinguish between different types of simultaneous talk in conversations, researchers have often used the model of turn-taking proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). This model states that a turn can be a unit of any length, and at the end of a turn (a transition relevance place) a set of rules apply to how the turn-taking progresses: 1) The speaker either selects another speaker (using a turn allocation component); 2) the next speaker selects her/himself to speak; 3) if no next speaker is selected the current speaker continues. This model provides the basis for discriminating between inadvertent overlap and interruptions that are dominant and violations of the turn-taking system in conversations. At rule 2) more than one speaker can select themselves to speak, giving rise to overlapping speech. A speaker may also simply

misproject the transition relevance place (they think someone has finished a turn when they have not), which will also result in overlapping speech. So it is possible to classify an instance of overlapping speech as an interruption when overlapping speech occurs at a point where there is no transition relevance place.

However, there is a further problem with relying upon a purely structural explanation for the classification of interruptions and inadvertent overlaps. The work of Coates (1989) and Edelsky (1981) suggest that even if an interruption occurs in the middle of another speaker's turn, it does not necessarily have to be a marker of dominant behaviour, it may be a *supportive* intervention. A classification of interruptions cannot therefore rely on an analysis of turn structure alone, but must also consider wider contextual factors such as the aims of the participants and the effects of the interruption upon the subsequent interaction.

The system for classifying overlapping speech as either inadvertent overlaps or interruptions devised by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (SSJ) is not fully applicable to debates, because debates have a completely different turn-taking system to conversations. According to SSJ's analysis of spoken interaction, debates are the most 'extreme transformation of conversation – most extreme in fully fixing the most important (and perhaps nearly all) of the parameters which conversations allows to vary' (1974: 731). SSJ use a conversation analytic approach to investigate the turn taking system of conversations. The first step of this approach is to observe re-occurring patterns in 'naturally occurring' data. Making such observations with respect to debates allows the identification of the components of the turn taking systems which will be discussed in more detail in sections 5.4., 5.5. and 5.6. below.

Out of the fourteen facts that SSJ identify as pertaining to conversation (1974: 701), seven also apply to House of Commons debates. These are 1) speaker change occurs; 2) overwhelmingly one party talks at a time; 3) occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common but brief¹; 4) transitions (from one turn to the next) with no gap and overlap are common; 5) Turn allocation techniques are used; 6) repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn-taking

errors; and 7) the number of the participants can vary. The difference between conversations and debates in accordance with the facts identified by SSJ are: 1) In conversations turn order is not fixed but varies whereas in debates it is partially fixed; 2) Turn size is not fixed in conversations but is sometimes limited in debates; 3) The length of a conversation is not specified in advance, whereas a debate does have time restrictions; 4) the relative distribution of turns is not fixed in advance in conversations but some turns in debates are pre-specified; 5) In conversations talk can be discontinuous but in debates it must progress from one speech to another; 6) in conversations the topics are not specified in advance, but in debates they are specified; 7) in conversations turns (or 'turn construction units') vary from one word to much longer utterances whereas in debates turns vary greatly but very rarely consist of one word utterances. Finally, this comparison also identifies the particular role of the Speaker as a participant within the debate with responsibilities for ensuring adherence to the rules. The Speaker is in control of turn order; the length of turns and debates; the relative distribution of turns; and often provides the turn allocation components and repair mechanisms. The role of the Speaker is examined in more detail in section 5.6.

5.3. The Debate Floor

The House of Commons is a forum in which the contributions of Members are strictly controlled by rules about when they can speak. These are enforced both by the Speaker, and through the vigilance of MPs in the chamber who can draw the Speaker's attention to rule violations by shouting 'order' as an appeal to the Speaker to stop the debate on a 'point of order'. In their study of US televised political debates, Adams and Edelsky (1990) note that debates consist of an 'ideal' form when the rules and procedures are adhered to and the debate offers participants an equal opportunity to speak. The comparison of the operational factors in the turn-taking systems for conversations and debates (above) identified the 'ideal' progression of turns in debates, devised in order to 'permit the equalization of turns' (SSJ 1974: 730). Alongside this ideal or canonical form there also exists the 'real' event in which 'illegal' violations of the rules take place. In order to identify the extent to which female and male MPs have control

over the debate floor it is necessary to attempt a description of the floor taking both the ideal and illegal turns into account.

The ideal progression of debates is restricted so that the system is as fair as possible in that speakers can express themselves without interruption, and that every participant has the opportunity to speak. Participants are allotted a speaking turn in advance of the debate if they have particular responsibilities in the debate for introducing or opposing a motion (see also section 5.2.1. above). As noted in the ethnographic description in Chapter Four, if an MP is not allotted a speaking turn in advance of the debate MPs must signal to the Speaker that they wish to contribute by standing up at the end of a speech. The Speaker then calls one of the standing MPs to speak in the debate. It will be shown below that this ideal is not adhered to in terms of the turn-taking system of debates in the House of Commons, and 'thus a speech event that should allow everyone an equal chance becomes an event in which prior inequalities (e.g. gender, age and ethnicity) can be re-enacted' (Edelsky and Adams 1990: 171). The interaction is prone to violations of the rules by MPs who aim to promote their own speech or to undermine the speech of another MP.

There are two ways in which MPs can intervene in a speech. Firstly, the 'legal' or 'ideal' way where an intervening MP asks an MP to 'give way' during a speech. In this case, the MP giving the speech is in control of whether or not they allow another MP to intervene. The MP giving the speech can refuse the request and carry on speaking, or they can delay until they have reached a point in their speech at which it is appropriate or advantageous to give way. Although the MP giving the speech decides whether or not to accept a request to give way in a debate, and therefore controls the interaction, the act of one MP asking another to give way may be a marker of dominant behaviour in debates. Certainly, an MP who makes interventions affects the interaction more than one who does not. An analysis of interventions to give way, and the classification of these interventions according to whether they are markers of dominant behaviour follows in section 5.4. below.

The second way an MP can gain the floor is by making an illegal intervention from a sitting position. These types of interventions are not permissible according to the rules of debates yet they are very common. Transcript 1 below shows both the legal and illegal or 'out of turn' utterances in a Prime Minister's question time session.

Transcript 1: Jane Griffiths' Question to the Prime Minister (08/07/98, Video Extract 1)

KEY: SP = the Speaker; JG = Jane Griffiths (Labour); PM = Prime Minister
 MPs = 'crowd' noises made by MPs; 1MP one MP speaking from a sitting position
 (O) = Opposition; (L) = Labour; *Italics* = speech from a sitting position
 (.) = micropause of less than a second; (1) timed pause in seconds; underline = emphasis on word or syllable; CAPS = shouting

1SP : order order I must remind the Honourable Lady and the House that
 2SP : the Prime Minister is responsible only for his own government's policies (.) and
 MPs : *cheer*
 3SP : not for the the activities of the Opposition (.) if she could rephrase her question in
 MPs : *cheermuttermutter cheercheer*
 4SP : some way of course I would hear it and I am sure that the Prime Minister is
 5SP : already forming an answer (.) whereby ha ha ha ha whereby (.) he will enunciate
 MPs : *LAUGHLAUGHlaugh muttermuttermuttermutter*
 6SP : his responsibilities in terms of policy on these matters (.) Miss Griffiths it is
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermuttermutter*
 7SP : your first question in Prime Minister's question time (.) could you rephrase it in
 1MP : *well done*
 8SP : some way th that the Prime Minister is responsible (4)
 MPs : *laughlaughlaughmuttermuttermutter*
 9JG (L) : thank you madam Speaker I stand corrected (1)
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermuttermuttermuttermutter*
 10JG (L) : would the would the Prime Minister agree with me that
 1MP (O) : *muttermuttermuttermutter*
 11 JG(L) : if (.) the (.) party opposite (2)
 1MP (O) : *NO NO no*
 MPs : *JEERJEERJEERjeer*
 12SP : quiet QUIET (7)
 MPs : *JEERmuttermuttermuttermutter*
 1MP (L) : *policy policy confirm our policy policy*
 13JG (L) : would the would the Prime Minister agree with me (.) w would he would he
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermutter*
 14JG (L) : share with me in confirming that our policy is to support the poorest workers
 MPs : *cheercheer*
 15JG (L) : in this country (5)
 MPs : *cheercheer cheerCHEERCHEERcheercheermuttermuttermuttermutter*
 16SP : well done that girl well done ha ha (4)
 MPs : *muttermuttermuttermuttermuttermutterLAUGHlaughlaughlaugh*
 17{P M} : my honourable friend is quite right (.) quite right (.) no we (.) the position of the
 MPs : *LAUGHlaughmuttermuttermuttermutter*
 1MP(O) : *GIVEN ENOUGH TIME*
 18PM : government will remain that we support the minimum wage and we look forward to
 hearing a position from the party opposite

The transcript shows the main or 'legal' speaking turns as the numbered lines in the transcript. These lines are the only parts of the interaction that are recognised as being part of the debate, and (as mentioned in Chapter Three) the only part of the interaction recorded in the Hansard report. The other utterances (shown in italics in the transcript) are not a recognised part of the debate and form part of the 'illegal' utterances in debates. The complexity of the different types of contributions shown in the transcript, and the distinction between the 'ideal' and 'illegal' progression of the debate means that the debate floor and the different legal and illegal turn-taking systems must be examined in some detail.

The 'floor' in spoken interaction can be thought of as an interactional structure (Edelsky 1980: 383) related to the turn-taking mechanism of the interaction. The floor has been 'variously defined as a speaker, a turn, and control over part of conversation' (1980: 401). An analysis of which participant holds the floor often necessitates the attribution of a turn to one speaker. In her study of academic meetings, Edelsky notes that this 'one at a time' sequence is a conceptual prerequisite for much research into turn-taking, but that actual utterances may not be attributable to any one speaker (1980: 396). This leads Edelsky to define the floor as:

the acknowledged 'what's going on' within psychological time/space. What's going on can be the development of a topic or function (teasing, soliciting a response, etc.) or an interaction of the two. It can be developed or controlled by one person at a time or by several simultaneously or in quick succession. It is official or acknowledged in that, if questioned, participants could describe what's going on as 'he's talking about grades' or 'we're all answering her' (1980: 405).

The 'what's going on' of legal speakers in debates can be described as 'the MP is giving a speech'. In the case of illegal speakers the 'what's going on' can be described as 'an individual MP is responding to something that has been said', or 'a group of MPs are reacting to something that has been said'. In this sense, the illegal turns are contingent upon the legal ones.

Edelsky's (1980: 405) definition of the floor means that a speaker can have a speaking turn without necessarily holding the floor. For example, requests for clarification, backchannels (see section 5.5.) and hearing and understanding

checks are not necessarily floor-holding speaking turns. In debates, collective illegal responses fall into this category and are therefore not floor-holding turns. However, individual illegal questions or comments that are responded to by the MP giving the speech can hold the floor. Although these comments are always made in response to something that is said in the legal speech of an MP, when the legal MP responds to the illegal intervention the 'what's going on' can be described as 'the MP is responding to the illegal intervention'. In this way the focus of the interaction shifts from the legal to the illegal speaker, and the illegal speaker can be said to hold the floor (see section 5.5. below).

Edelsky posits a two-floor model based on data from the meetings she recorded. The F1 floor is a floor developed by one speaker, whereas the F2 floor is 'collaboratively developed' and cannot be attributed to one speaker (1980: 391). The F2 floor includes instances of collective laughter. Edelsky's notion of an F1 and F2 floor cannot be applied to debates because a single MP is always occupying the floor in some way, either by making a speech, or by being responded to by a group of MPs. Whilst there are instances of collaborative turns in debates (when MPs shout at the same time), these turns do not occupy the floor as this is occupied by the legal speaker. These collaborative turns also occur at the same time as single turns (unlike Edelsky's analysis where F1 and F2 occur separately) in which case the single, legal turns hold the floor and the collective turns relate to the legal turns as 'backchannel' markers of support or opposition. There is therefore only one debate floor, held by legal speakers and individual illegal speakers who gain a response from a legal speaker.

An MP's legal participation in debates (whether as a main speaker or as an intervener) can be thought of as a different type of behaviour to that of an MP's illegal participation in a debate. This difference in behaviour is itself anticipated by the reinforcement of formal rules of legal turn-taking with physical movements (standing to speak and sitting to signify the end of a speaking turn). The differences in contributing legally and illegally in debates partly stem from the mechanism of debates and the fact that some legal turns are specified in advance, whereas all illegal turns are spontaneous. Perhaps more significantly the illegal participation of an MP shows her/him to be a 'rule breaker' in debates.

Rule breaking in order to gain the floor in debates may be a marker of a dominant or powerful speaker.

Although all participants occupy one floor it is useful to distinguish legal from illegal turns in debates by referring to D1 (legal) and D2 (illegal) turn-taking systems because they operate under different rules. In this way, the numbered lines in Transcript 1 above represent D1 legal turns, and the italicised lines in the transcript represent D2 illegal turns. Illegal D2 turns have various forms ranging from a number of MPs shouting, to a single MP directly challenging a D1 turn. D2 turns have various functions ranging from a general show of approval or disapproval to directly criticising a point made by a D1 speaker. The distinction between the D1 and D2 turns also provides the basis upon which it may be possible to differentiate between an intervention that is characteristic of non-disruptive utterance made in the D2 system and a D2 interruption that directly impinges upon and violates the turn-taking mechanism of the D1 system. This distinction allows the classification of an utterance made by a D2 speaker that impinges onto the D1 system as an interruption. This can be viewed as the strongest marker of powerful and dominant behaviour in debate interaction.

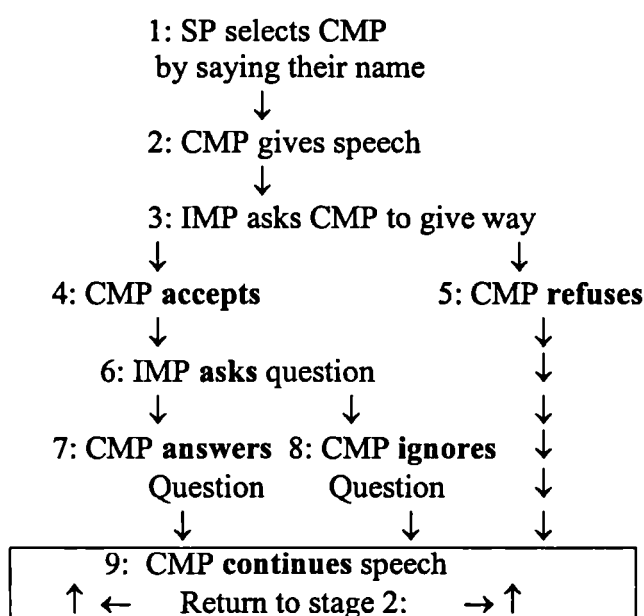
Another important component in assessing the extent to which MPs are more or less powerful participants in debates is to assess the frequency with which the Speaker calls them to order. The Speaker's interventions are an important component of the turn-taking system and an analysis of their frequency shows not only which MPs experience interventions and under what circumstances, but also allows a classification of rule-breaking according to which rule-breaking activities are commonly tolerated by the Speaker, and which are not. Illegal speaking turns made by MPs are frequently not censured by the Speaker. If it is found that different MPs break different rules, or break the same rules in different ways, and these breaches are differentially censured by the Speaker, then this may contribute to the construction of MPs as more or less powerful in debates.

5.4. Legal Interventions in Debates: Giving Way

5.4.1. Requesting a speaker to give way

When giving a speech in the House of Commons, MPs can accept interventions so that another MP can comment upon what is being said. As discussed in the previous section, this type of intervention is part of the ‘legal’ system of turn-taking in debates and belongs to the D1 turn taking system. In order to make another speaker ‘give way’ an intervening MP stands up, holds out one arm and says ‘Would the right honourable lady/gentleman give way?’. The main speaker can then decide either to comply with the request by sitting down and listening to the intervention, or they can refuse to give way. The MP making the intervention usually asks the MP making the speech a question, although this does not have to be the case (see Transcript 2 below, lines 6-13). The MP giving the speech who can be referred to as the ‘current MP’ (CMP) can choose whether to respond to what is said by the ‘intervening MP’ (IMP), or whether to ignore what is said by continuing their speech without reference to the intervention. The ‘give way’ turn-taking system and the choices available to the CMP are represented in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: The turn-taking choices of an MP when requested to give way.



Give way interventions made by IMPs can be oppositional or supportive, usually depending upon whether the IMP is from the opposing party to the CMP, or whether they belong to the same party. Transcript 2 below shows both critical and supportive give way interventions.

Transcript 2: Giving way (01/03/99, Video extract 2)

Key

CMP = 'current' MP, IMP = intervening MP, f = female, m = male

(C) = Conservative, (L) = Labour

(.) = micropause of under a second, (1) = timed pause in seconds

underline = emphasis on word or syllable

(laughs) = noises made by the CMP, [hear hear] = noises made by a group of
MPs

CMP f (C) : it is very significant that this has not taken place (.)	1
there is an <u>e</u> lement in <u>my</u> view of <u>deceit</u> in the way in which	2
this legislation (.) has been prote ^c or presented in this house	3
IMP m (L) : would the right honourable lady give way	4
CMP f (C) : I will	5
IMP m (L) : has the Hon. Lady been as ^l ee ^p for the last two years	6
the European <u>C</u> ourt of Human Rights have <u>o</u> rd ^e red us	7
to change our laws (.) we <u>h</u> ave to we have to <u>ch</u> ange the <u>l</u> aw	8
(1 illegal intervention)	9
the honourable gentleman from his lazing position says rubbish (.)	10
unfortunately life is <u>l</u> ife (.) and <u>l</u> ife says we've got to	11
change the law and we're <u>d</u> oing it (.) it's not there is <u>n</u> o	12
hidden agenda there (1 illegal intervention)	13
CMP f (C) : gentlemen (1 illegal intervention) I'm really I'm as aware as	14
<u>h</u> e is that there's been a debate on the issue from that perspective	15
and that the honourable gentleman opposite has made his (.)	16
<u>co</u> ntrib ^u tion to some extent but that does not <u>al</u> ter the fact that	17
we are still here debating (.) what is going in this case to	18
be <u>do</u> mestic <u>l</u> egislation and which as <u>I</u> have pointed out I <u>bel</u> ieve	19
we have <u>n</u> ot been <u>e</u> n ^t irely open and clear with the public	20
as to the motivation <u>b</u> eh ⁱ nd it and that is why I'm trying to	21

ana analyse that	22
IMP f (C) : would the honourable lady give way	23
CMP f (C) : I will	24
IMP f (C) : I'm grateful to the Honourable Lady would the Honourable Lady	25
agree (.) my Honourable Friend agree with <u>me</u> that although the	26
European Court might be requiring us to <u>change</u> the law (.) it doesn't	27
mean to say that the law that we are about to change er th that	28
the change is a <u>good</u> one it could be completely <u>wrong</u> and therefore	29
it's a <u>shame</u> that people of principle <u>don't</u> stand up in this House	30
and <u>say</u> so (.) I'm sick to <u>death</u> of hearing about the European	31
court quite frankly	32
CMP f (C): my Honourable friend knows my views on that and I entirely	33
agree with everything she said (speech continues)	34

The give way intervention on line 6 of the above transcript shows a male Labour MP saying that the government does not have a 'hidden agenda' (as the CMP has suggested), but that the new legislation is being made in response to EU guidelines. This intervention is also directly critical in tone, starting 'Has the right honourable lady been asleep for the last two years?' (line 6). The intervention can therefore be classified as oppositional to the CMP. The second intervention to give way comes from a female Conservative MP (line 25) who responds to the first intervention by saying that EU directives are not necessarily correct. In doing so this IMP is defending the CMP who has stated (lines 17 - 19) that EU laws do not have to have a bearing on UK domestic legislation. The second give way intervention can therefore be classified as supportive of the CMP.

It has been claimed that women are more likely than men to make supportive interventions, and men are more likely than women to make oppositional or confrontational contributions (Coates 1989; Edelsky 1981). The analysis of interventions to 'give way' in five debates (each 60 – 90 minutes long)² shows that out of a total of 66 interventions to give way, 64 were oppositional and two were supportive (see Table 1 below). One of the supportive 'give way' interventions was made by a male MP, one by a female MP. This shows that the supportive interventions to 'give way' are extremely uncommon in debates, and male and female MPs both participate in this kind of intervention. In the same

sample of debates there was no evidence to suggest interventions to give way (either oppositional or supportive) differed according to whether the intervening MP was male or female.

Table 1: Give way interventions in five debates

	Debate 1		Debate 2		Debate 3		Debate 4		Debate 5	
Topic	Education		Age of Consent		Position of Trust		Foreign Affairs		Report (Racism in police)	
Number of Interventions to 'give way'	15		8		9		14		20	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	11	4	7	1	6	3	13	1	15	5
Of which Supportive 'give ways'	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

As shown in Table 1 (above) both male and female MPs intervened in debates, and the fact that women intervened less than men reflects the representation of women in only 25% of the seats available in the House of Commons. In two of the debates (2 and 4) women MPs were responsible for fewer than 25% of the give way interventions, and in three of the debates (1, 3 and 5) they were responsible for between 33% and 50% of the interventions. Given the much smaller population of women in the House of Commons, this sample of debate turns did not show a substantial difference in the number of male and female MPs requesting that a CMP should give way.

5.4.2. Refusing to comply with a request to give way.

Although the MP giving the speech is in control of when and whether to give way it is a generally accepted convention to comply with a request to give way rather than to refuse (Davis 1989: 66). This convention, which does not form part of the official rules of debates, exists so that the exchange of ideas and views can occur; otherwise MPs giving speeches could refuse to allow any criticisms or questions within their own speaking turns. Refusing to give way is therefore marked behaviour that may give rise to a number of interpretations. A refusal to give way

may indicate that the speaker is trying to finish her/his speech within a certain amount of time, and therefore does not want to stop for interventions. The speaker may have received a number of requests to give way from a particular MP already and does not wish to give way on a similar point again. However, a refusal to give way may also indicate that a speaker is not confident of her/his argument, or that she/he is unable to deal with criticisms: in this case the refusal to give way may mark the MP as being a less powerful participant in debates than one who accepts all interventions.

In the analysis of the debate turns belonging to the D1 turn taking system, it was found that refusals to give way were extremely uncommon when the CMP was a backbench MP with no particular responsibilities within the parliamentary hierarchy. However, the opening and closing speeches given by government ministers and opposition shadow ministers contained many refusals to give way. For example, when the Home Secretary, Jack Straw opened the debate on the findings of the Stephen Lawrence enquiry³ the speech lasted for 34 minutes in which time he was asked to give way and complied 11 times. He refused to give way three times. Other speakers in the debates were not asked to give way as much and did not refuse to give way at all. This pattern is repeated in the other four debates. The number of times a speaker is asked to give way depends upon many different factors. In the example mentioned above, Jack Straw was representing the views of the government and speaking about a highly contentious and important issue – institutional racism in the police - which had attracted much media attention. The number of times he was asked to give way reflects the importance of the topic, and the interest of MPs in raising or being seen to raise questions about the enquiry. It was necessary for Jack Straw to refuse to give way in order to finish his speech and to allow subsequent MPs an opportunity to speak. Furthermore, opening and closing speeches (especially on the findings of an enquiry) often contain more information (usually written before the debate) compared with more impromptu speeches later in the debate made by MPs who had not been guaranteed a speaking turn in advance.

The fact that requests to give way are much more frequent in ‘important’ speeches made by high status participants may indicate that requests to give way

are an indicator of the importance or the success of a speech. The more contentious, important or controversial the speech, the more requests to give way. This idea was expressed by a female MP interviewee⁴ who reported that in her experience when she gave a speech that did not contain any requests to give way she felt that the speech was less successful than one in which she was asked to give way often⁵.

A re-examination of the model of the choices of a CMP (Figure 5 above) in the light of these findings show that external factors, such as the status of an MP, affect the ways in which the rules are put into practice. MPs of a low status in parliament do not commonly refuse to give way, partly because they are not asked to give way as much as higher status participants and perhaps partly because if they did refuse to give way they would be construed as a 'weak' participant in the debate who is unable to defend their arguments. However, high status Ministers are asked to give way and refuse to give way frequently. In this case refusing to give way reinforces the high status of the participants and may actually contribute to their construction as powerful participants in debates.

5.4.3. The number of 'legal' turns taken by male and female MPs in all House of Commons speech events in the full data corpus.

Having considered requests and refusals to give way in a corpus of five debates this section assesses the number of legal interventions made by male and female MPs in the full 60-hour data corpus⁶. In the case of debates this includes give way interventions, and in the case of Question Time sessions this includes 'legal' questions and responses. Although this analysis is not as detailed as the analysis of debate turns in the small sample of five debates (used in the rest of this chapter), it nevertheless gives an impression of the participation of male and female MPs (and the extent to which they occupy the 'legal' debate floor) in a large number and variety of speech events. A turn by turn analysis was undertaken in which all the 'legal' turns contributed by MPs were noted. Table 2 (below) shows the participation of male and female MPs in the entire corpus.

This table shows that male MPs contributed 83% of all the speaking turns in the corpus, and female MPs 17%. As the percentage of male MPs in the House of Commons is 82% and female MPs 18%, the participation of male MPs in Table 2 is 1% over their representation in terms of numbers of seats, and female MPs 1% under. Therefore male and female participation in all the speech events in the corpus approximately reflects their representation in the House of Commons.

Table 2: Number of male and female (legal) turns in the whole corpus

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
All debates and Question Times	59	59 Hours	1926	1609	317
Percentage of total number of turns				83%	17%

Each different type of speech event in the corpus was assessed in order to establish whether male and female MPs participate in similar proportions in all the different types of speech event. The three main types of speech events are: debates⁷; Prime Minister's Question Times and Departmental Question Times. Table 3 below shows that as suggested by the analysis of data from the small corpus of debates in section 5.4.1. above, male and female MPs participated in debates in exactly the same proportion as their representation in the House of Commons (male 82% and female 18%).

Table 3: Showing male and female MPs' participation in all debates.

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
Debates	33	45 hours	794	652	142
Percentage of total number of turns				82%	18%

However, Table 4 below shows that male and female participation in Prime Minister's Question Times differed. 93% of the questions were asked by men and only 7% asked by women⁸.

Table 4: Male and female MPs' participation in PMQT sessions.

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
PMQT (all turns)	11	5.5 hours	503	481	22
Percentage of total number of turns				96%	4%
PMQT: Questions Only			250	228	22
Percentage of total number of questions				93%	7%
PMQT: Responses Only			253	253	0
Percentage of total number of responses				100%	0%

Table 5 (below) shows that female MPs participated more and male MPs less in Departmental Question Time sessions than in any other type of speech event in the corpus.

Table 5: Participation of male and female MPs in Departmental Question Time sessions.

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
QT (all turns)	15	8 hours	629	476	153
Percentage of total number of turns				75%	25%
QT: Questions Only			315	260	55
Percentage of total number of questions				83%	17%
QT: Responses Only			314	216	98
Percentage of total number of responses				70%	30%

The fact that female MPs contributed 25% of all the turns in Departmental Question Times (and male MPs 75%) is because female MPs were responsible for 30% of all responses given in these sessions. The amount of questions asked by male and female MPs was the same percentage as in the corpus as a whole (Table 2) and as in debates (Table 3). Therefore a few women on the government front bench who gave responses account for this difference.

This analysis of legal turns in the 60-hour data corpus shows that in all speech events men and women made legal turns in proportion to their representation in parliament. However, women were under-represented in the number of questions they asked in Prime Minister's question times, and over-represented (in terms of responses) in Departmental Question Times.

5.5. Illegal Interventions in Debates

5.5.1. Collective shows of support and disapproval

Although the ideal form of the debate precludes any MP other than the CMP speaking at one time it is usual practice in debates that MPs make supportive or disapproving utterances during speeches. The traditional expression of approval in the House of Commons is shouting 'hear hear' to show support, and there are a range of ways of showing disapproval ranging from the shout of 'shame' to the call to 'withdraw' when a CMP has made a contentious statement, or one that includes 'unparliamentary language'. This type of illegal intervention is usually tolerated by the Speaker unless it is prolonged and therefore inhibits the CMP's speech, or if it stops the Speaker from hearing the debate (see section 5.6. below).

The main characteristic of this type of intervention is that it is a collective contribution made by a number of speakers. Although as stated above, particular words and phrases are associated with disapproval and approval, these utterances are commonly expressed as phonemes that are indistinguishable as individual lexical items, that can not attributed to one speaker. Illegal interventions made by individual speakers are discussed in section 5.5.2. below.

Collective interventions have a range of functions. One of these functions is to show support or opposition to the content of what the CMP is saying in her/his speech. This type of linguistic behaviour has many features in common with applause, an activity that is not permitted in the debating chamber. In his study of political speeches at party conferences, Atkinson (1984) found that there was much regularity in the way that audiences co-ordinate their behaviour with that of public speakers. This 'response timing' occurs in regular patterns, applause occurring predictably at the end of speeches and when the speaker sums up one part of the speech before moving on to the next (Atkinson 1984: 32). Atkinson also notes that applause can be triggered by the speaker using a number of devices, including mentioning 'us' and 'them' and by doing so instigating a loyal response from party members (1984: 37), as well as by using other rhetorical strategies such as introducing another politician's name (1984: 47-85).

A comparison can be drawn between Atkinson's observations about applause and the cheering noises made by MPs in the House of Commons debating chamber. The differences between applause and cheering in this context are firstly that it is not possible to sustain cheering for as long as applause because of the necessity of drawing breath, secondly that applause takes longer to initiate than cheering because of the time taken to make a physical action rather than to make a sound using the voice. The third difference is that it is possible to hear (although without much accuracy) whether it is male or female MPs who are cheering, which is not the case with applause.

This collective show of support or approval in debates functions in a similar way to backchannels in conversations. Backchannels serve to show that the audience is receiving the message given by the speaker, and that they are aligned to the speaker in terms of the message. Atkinson (1984: 32) notes that applause is usually initiated just before the completion of a turn, and when it is delayed the response sounds 'so hesitant, feeble and lukewarm that it may well leave a more damaging impression than if no-one had applauded at all' (1984: 33). Similarly, in conversation minimal responses (like 'mm' or 'yeah') occurring just before the end or immediately after a speaker's turn show approval and support, whereas if they are delayed this may express the listener's indifference or lack of support for the speaker. Transcript 1, p.121 in section 5.3. above shows these collective shows of support or disapproval function in a similar way to applause in party conferences and backchannels in conversation. The collective responses occur just before the end of a speaker's turn as can be seen on line 8 and line 15, there are no delayed responses in this transcript. Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that collective responses occur when there is a pause in the speech (Transcript 1 lines 5 and 17). The interaction of D1 legal speakers and D2 collective responses therefore follows regular patterns similar to those observed by Atkinson (1984).

When female MPs were interviewed about this type of behaviour in the House of Commons, they identified it as a male activity (one interviewee described it as 'boyish') in which they did not participate. The interviewees associated collective shows of support or disapproval with waving the 'order papers' (which contain the

order of debates for the day), also described by interviewees as behaviour in which they did not participate. One of the interviewees said that she was more likely to cheer or shout when the chamber was full (such as in Prime Minister's Question Time) because she felt that her voice was "less noticeable" amongst many others. Another MP reported being told not to make 'that noise' (referring to the activity of cheering in a debate) by a female colleague in a debate because it was associated with male rather than female behaviour⁹. The cheering noise sounds as if it is made by male MPs. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which female MPs actually are involved in this behaviour as they may simply adopt a lower pitch to their voices, or it may be that it is just the perception of the researcher/observer that this noise is associated with male MPs. However, the interview data suggests that collective cheering is viewed as male behaviour by some female MPs.

5.5.2. Illegal interventions by individual MPs

Illegal interventions made by individual MPs are common in debates. There were 41 individual illegal interventions in the data corpus of five debates. There were 66 legal give way interventions in the same debates (see section 5.4. above) so illegal interventions represent a substantial proportion of all interventions. The frequency of illegal interventions made by male and female MPs in five debates is shown in Table 6 below.

Illegal interventions made by MPs can be defined as any verbal contribution made from a sitting position that can be attributed to an individual MP. Sometimes collective shows of support or disapproval are initiated by a single MP, but they are so closely followed by a collective response it is not possible to attribute the initial remark to an individual MP. Before assessing the extent to which individual illegal interventions advantage the MPs who make them, or attempting to establish if they are markers of dominant or powerful behaviour in debates, it is first necessary to classify different types of interventions according to their effect on the progression of debate turns.

Table 6: Illegal interventions in debates

	Debate 1		Debate 2		Debate 3		Debate 4		Debate 5	
Topic	Education		Age of Consent		Position of Trust		Foreign Affairs		Report (Racism in police)	
Number of Illegal interventions By MPs	7		5		21		4		4	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	6	1	5	0	20	1	4	0	2	2

The first type of individual illegal intervention is when an IMP shouts a one word interjection or short comment such as ‘disgraceful!’ ‘resign!’ or ‘not true’ which usually refers to something stated by the CMP. The comment does not elicit a response from the CMP or anyone else in the chamber. The comments can be supportive or oppositional of the CMP. An example of this type of response is shown in Transcript 3 below.

Transcript 3: An illegal intervention that does not gain a response from other MPs (debate 3)

CMP f (C) : because it is their 16 year old sons who are now likely to be put	1
in this position (.) as depicted on recent Television programmes	2
which have already been mentioned	3
IMP m (C) : shocking	4
CMP f (C) : erm on channel four recently (turn continues)	5

In this case the IMP is supporting the CMP by agreeing that the television programme was shocking. In the five debates there are two other such supportive interventions, all made by the same MP in the same speech. This can be thought of as a two-part utterance consisting of a statement by the CMP and a comment by the IMP, after which the CMP continues without reference to the intervention. Often the IMP’s intervention will overlap the CMP’s speech. This type of intervention is not typically supportive as in the example above, but is more often critical of the CMP (see line 19 of Transcript 7, p.140 below). These interventions do not gain a response and do not directly impinge on the turn-taking mechanism of the D1 although the support or criticism voiced by the IMP

may indirectly affect the CMP's speech or other participants' perception of the speech. There were eight of these two part utterances (both supportive and critical) in the five debates, 19% of all the illegal interventions. All of these illegal interventions were made by male MPs, none by female MPs.

An illegal intervention sequence of three parts is much more common than one of two parts. Three part exchanges consist of a statement in the speech of the CMP, then a comment by the IMP, then a response by the CMP. Typically the function of this intervention is to criticise, and the exchange consists of a statement then a criticism then a defence of the statement or counter-criticism of the IMP by the CMP. In the five debates 17 of the 41 illegal interventions consisted of a three part form (41% of all illegal interventions) where the function of the intervention was critical or oppositional to the CMP. Examples of this are shown in Transcripts 4 and 5, below:

Transcript 4: An illegal intervention that gains a response (debate 4)

CMP m(L): I have doubled the number of staff in the West Africa section covering	1
Sierra Leone	2
IMP m (C) : that's not true	3
CMP m(L): it <u>i</u> s true (.) it <u>i</u> s true (.) the Legg enquiry..(turn continues)	4

Transcript 5: An illegal intervention that gains a response (debate 3)

CMP m(LD): as I've said on previous occasions (.) the council of the BMA which	1
is not a <u>radical</u> organisation (.) was <u>un</u> animous in its recommendation	2
of a unified age of consent at 16 for the very reason that it would (.)	3
er er <u>re</u> duce the spread of HIV among young <u>pe</u> ople (.)	4
IMP f (C) : how do <u>the</u> y know (.)	5
CMP m(LD):well they do know from other <u>pl</u> aces that where you criminalise	6
an activity and drive it underground (.) you are not able to get	7
the information you are <u>e</u> ntitled to (turn continues)	8

This type of three-part intervention consists of a D2 speaker effectively breaking into the turn-taking system of the D1 legal system of turns. This type of illegal

intervention can therefore be classified as an interruption. Although the CMP can choose whether or not to respond to the criticism made by the IMP it is apparent from the interruptions in the five debates that a direct criticism of the CMP's statement nearly always elicits a response from the CMP. This is probably because failing to defend a direct criticism would weaken the CMP's speech.

In over half of the instances of these interruptions the IMP has previously used the legal 'give way' intervention system, or asks the CMP to give way shortly after an interruption. This means that a two-person exchange consisting of both legal interventions and interruptions can develop. This breaks down the debate system in which the formal debate rules exist to preserve a speech by speech structure where only legal 'give way' interventions are allowed. Transcript 6 below shows how a combination of legal interventions and interruptions can be made by one MP to break into the D1 turn taking system.

Transcript 6: Legal and illegal interventions (debate 1)

IMP f(L) : (Give way intervention) how would he see <u>that</u> funded	1
CMP m(C): well I I don't have to take that <u>decision</u> er for a few years so I think	2
IMP m(L) : that's convenient	3
CMP m(C): the Minister says that's convenient and I have to <u>say</u> to the Minister	4
is that he <u>does</u> have to take that decision (.) and what would be	5
<u>extremely</u> interesting is to hear (.) er what <u>he</u> has to <u>say</u>	6
about this (turn continues for 1 minute)	7
funding which may er well not in individual cases either <u>be</u> fair or be	8
<u>seen</u> to be fair (.) I will happily give way to the Minister	9
IMP m(L) : (Give way intervention) it is interesting that the honourable gentleman	10
er seizes on this this <u>aspect</u> of the Kennedy (1 minute of turn)	11
surely he'll acknowledge that there is <u>value</u> in that kind of approach	12
CMP m(C): there's value th th there may well be value if it is approached in a	13
sensible <u>way</u> (turn continues for 25 seconds)	14
the next phase is that we'll then have Kennedy <u>estates</u> (.) and and that	15
there is a <u>danger</u> of er going down a route that I don't think <u>anyone</u> w	16
would want to go down (.)	17
IMP m(L) : sink estates	18

CMP m(C) : the Minister uses the phrase sink estates from a <u>sedentary position</u>	19
and er well I I (.) hope that the Minister is <u>not</u> going to introduce	20
a method of funding that actually does stigmatise either	21
individuals or <u>anyone</u> who come from a any particular area and the	22
<u>danger</u> of well-meaning interventions such as the one he just made	23
is that he will go down (.) that that <u>route</u> (turn continues)	24

Transcript 6 above shows how a single MP (marked IMP m (L) in the transcript) interrupts the CMP (line 3), then makes use of the legal 'give way' system (line 10), then interrupts again (line 18) with the comment 'sink estates'. It is unlikely that the IMP would be granted three legal give way opportunities within this amount of time, so the interruptions represent a powerful and effective way of sustaining opposition to the CMP's speech. These interruptions can therefore be considered as powerful or dominant behaviour in debates. Out of the 17 oppositional interruptions occurring in the five debates, only one was made by a female MP (shown in Transcript 5 above).

Transcript 6 above shows how a section of a debate larger than a two or three part exchange can be affected by sustained interventions. When classifying different types of illegal interventions, some sections of the five debates needed to be analysed as larger units, rather than just taking into account the immediately preceding or subsequent turns. In transcript 7 below (also shown in a different form in Transcript 2 in section 5.4.1., p.126) the speech of the female CMP is stopped by a legal intervention (line 6), then the give way intervention contains three illegal interventions (lines 9, 14 and 19).

Transcript 7: Sustained legal and illegal interventions (debate 3, Video extract 2)

CMP f (C) : it is very significant that this has not taken place (.)	1
there is an <u>element</u> in <u>my</u> view of <u>deceit</u> in the way in which	2
this legislation (.) has been protect er presented in this house	3
IMP m (L) : would the right honourable lady give way	4
CMP f (C) : I will	5
IMP m(L) : (Give way) has the Hon. Lady been <u>asleep</u> for the last two years	6
the European <u>Court</u> of Human Rights have <u>ordered</u> us to	7

change our laws (.) we <u>have</u> to we have to <u>change</u> the <u>law</u>	8
IMP m(C) : rubbish (1)	9
IMPm(L) : (Give way contd.) the honourable gentleman from his lazing position	10
says rubbish (.) unfortunately life is <u>life</u> (.) and <u>life</u> says we've got to	11
change the <u>law</u> and we're <u>doing</u> it (.) it's not there is <u>no</u> hidden agenda	12
there	13
IMP m(C): of course there is	14
IMPm(L) : (Give way contd) oh <u>rubbish</u> Winterton (.)you really are	15
a <u>silly</u> man (1)	16
MPs : [laughter]	17
CMP f (C) : gentlemen (.)	18
IMP m(C) : no more silly than <u>you</u>	19
CMP f (C) : I'm really I'm as aware as <u>he</u> is that there's been a debate on	20
the issue from that perspective and that the honourable gentleman	21
opposite has made his (.) <u>contribution</u> to some extent but that does	22
not <u>alter</u> the fact that we are still here debating (.) what is going in	23
this case to be <u>domestic</u> <u>legislation</u> (turn continues)	24

Here the D1 formal turn-taking system breaks down. The male Labour MP who makes the give way intervention is illegally challenged by the male Conservative MP. This extract shows two three part interruption structures (lines 8-10, and lines 13-16), and one two part intervention structure, lines 16 and 19. The focus of the debate is drawn away from the speech of the female Conservative MP (which should be protected from interventions by the debate rules) and becomes an exchange between two male MPs. The female MP attempts to regain the floor by saying 'gentlemen' on line 18 when the Speaker does not intervene, but she is not immediately successful and only resumes her speech on line 20. Although the female CMP grants the initial give way intervention, she does so under the condition that there will be a single intervention on her speech. As the MP giving the speech she should have the most access to or ownership of the floor, yet she is rendered powerless through a combination of legal and illegal interventions.

Having classified illegal interventions into collective and individual categories; identified two part interventions and three part interruptions made by individual MPs and shown how these can operate to break down the formal D1 turn-taking

system, it is clear that interventions and interruptions do represent powerful behaviour in debates. The interview data and observation of debates discussed above in relation to collective interventions suggests that female MPs do not engage in collective interventions as much as male MPs. Individual female MPs intervened illegally four times in the five debates, 10% of the total number of individual illegal interventions. In the same five debates female MPs made 21% of the legal give way interventions. Female MPs make proportionally fewer illegal interventions than legal interventions in these five debates. Of the four illegal interventions made by women in these debates, one was the correction of a reference made by the CMP; one was a supportive intervention (both two part interventions); one was the three part interruption shown in Transcript 5 above, and one was a response to a being directly addressed by the CMP.

Although the results of this analysis are taken from a relatively small sample of debates, if female MPs illegally interrupt less than male MPs, and if interruptions are a powerful tool in debates, then female MPs may be disadvantaged by this behaviour. Although the interruptions in Transcript 7 (p.139 above) are unprofessional and petty, the illegal turns nevertheless break down the D1 turn-taking system. The conclusion can be drawn that by not participating in illegal interventions, female MPs are not making use of all the interactional resources available to them and this may disadvantage them in terms of their access to and occupation of the D1 legal turn taking system, and therefore their power in debates.

5.5.2.1. Barracking

Barracking is a term used to refer to illegal interventions that directly attack the CMP. These are usually illegal interventions as it should be deemed 'out of order' to attack an MP within the legal give way system¹⁰. An utterance can be defined as barracking by its function but not by its structure, as verbal attacks can either consist of the two-part exchanges or the three-part exchanges identified above. Typically barracking comments are short one or two-word utterances such as 'rubbish' (Transcript 7, line 9, p.140). The functions of barracking can be seen as either an attempt to attack the substantive comments made by a CMP, or as a tactic to intimidate a CMP in order to make a speech less effective. This second

function can consist of extremely personal comments. Although there were no examples of more personal attacks in the corpus of five debates, comments such as ‘you nasty little squirt’ and ‘you pathetic wimp’ were given as examples of barracking by an interviewee (Appendix 2, Interview B, line 74).

As barracking is almost always a type of illegal intervention this data would suggest that female MPs are less likely to barrack than male MPs. Interview data also indicates that this may be the case: *If I was saying anything it would be ‘answer the question’, so women don’t really barrack and if they do it certainly isn’t personal.* (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 75-77).

There is also some evidence to show that barracking is used *against* women in an explicitly sexist way. For example, one of the women MPs interviewed (see Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 523-560, p.323) recounts an incident in which Dawn Primarolo (a Minister) was barracked by a group of MPs shouting at her to ‘show us your leg’. The same Minister was also barracked when she answered a question by repeating the answer she had given to the last question. This was intended to show the MP asking the question that he could not deliberately misinterpret a question in order to gain a supplementary question on another topic. In response to Primarolo’s answer a Conservative MP shouted ‘stupid woman’ at her, thinking that she had misunderstood the question. On this occasion the Speaker intervened and the MP who barracked was forced to withdraw his comment.

Interview data suggests it is common for women to be appraised in terms of their intellectual capabilities :

Any young attractive woman in the House of Commons is kind of you know an air-head. Which bearing in mind what you have to go through to get into the House of Commons it’s a bit you know, but that is the absolute standard.

(Appendix 2, Interview D, Lines 457-9)

This negative stereotyping of women by men according to whether or not they are intelligent is extremely polarised:

There can be another definition which is super-clever. So you're either a Blair's babe meaning you're just sub-standard or you're a brainy babe (...) You are most likely to just be a Blair's babe but if you can punch your way out of that one you punch your way up to the brainy babes. There's nowhere in-between. (...) It is about women not being able to have the normal range of characteristics. Men can be super-clever, medium clever you know medium thick or thick whereas women have more stereotyped labels. (Appendix 2, Interview D, Lines 465-480)

Examples of barracking involving this kind of sexist stereotyping are anecdotally common, and there are some examples in the 60-hour data corpus. An extension of the stereotype that women MPs are 'stupid' is that they are 'clones' and 'Stepford wives' who cannot think for themselves (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 397-426). In a debate on Manufacturing and Industrial Relations¹¹ a Conservative MP shouts at Margaret Beckett that she is 'like Dolly'¹², a cloned sheep.

This type of sexist barracking is pertinent to the consideration of turn-taking because it may well affect women's success in maintaining a speaking turn. As mentioned above, barracking is a tactic that functions to intimidate a speaker by incorporating personal remarks in order to make the CMP's speech less effective: shouting sexist comments at an MP is likely to have these effects. However, as Transcript 1 shows, barracking is not the only way in which women MPs can be intimidated. Jane Griffiths' question to the Prime Minister (Transcript 1, p.121) shows the hesitancy and confusion brought about by her error, and the laughter of MPs and the patronising remarks of the Speaker add to her inability to make the required intervention. Non-verbal sexist gestures made against women, such as the 'melon weighing' breast gesture mentioned in Chapter One have also been reported by MPs (Appendix 2, Interview A, line 554). All these tactics, like the 'hisses, boos, heckles and slow hand claps' made by boys in classroom interaction (Baxter 1999b: 219), show that male MPs not only make these illegal interventions more than women, but that women are subject to more obstacles than men in maintaining a speaking turn.

5.6. The Speaker's Interventions in Debates

In section 5.5. it was established that illegal interventions and interruptions occur frequently in debates. The Speaker's role in the preservation of the D1 legal turn-taking system in five debates is evaluated in this section by identifying the frequency with which the Speaker intervenes for different types of rule-breaking activities. I then assess the effects that the Speaker's interventions or lack of interventions have on the debate discourse.

The Speaker of the House of Commons has responsibility for ensuring that the rules of debates are adhered to in order to ensure that the interaction is fair and members have equal opportunities to speak. The Speaker is responsible for selecting (or calling) speakers for debates, both in advance of and during the debate, and for ensuring that the formal rules of debates are followed. The Speaker, the Right Honourable Betty Boothroyd MP, usually presides over debates for two hours at the beginning of a day's session (2.30 – 4.30 p.m.), for an hour between 6.30 and 7.30, and sometimes for a third period towards the end of the day's business. For the rest of the time one of three male deputy Speakers preside over debates. It is likely that there are variations between Speakers in the extent to which they enforce or tolerate particular rules. However, this sample of five debates is not large enough to evaluate differences between the Speakers.

When the Speaker wants to stop the debate because a violation of the rules has occurred, she stands up (thereby requiring the MP speaking to sit down) and says or shouts 'order'. This means that the Speaker wants to make a 'point of order' and correct behaviour or procedures. The Speaker then tells the MP(s) to change their behaviour or use the correct procedures. In an 'ideal' debate the Speaker would correct all violations of the formal rules. However, data from five debates (including the examples in section 5.5.) shows that the Speaker often tolerates rule breaking, and this affects the debate in various ways.

The number of Speakers' interventions and the number of illegal interventions in five debates are shown in Table 7 above. The table shows that during the five debates (each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes) the Speakers intervened

between 1 and 4 times in each debate and 13 times in all five debates. In contrast there were a total of 41 illegal or 'out of turn' interventions by MPs in the debates (between 4 and 21 in each debate) so the Speakers only rarely intervene to stop an MP speaking out of turn.

Table 7: The number of interventions made by the Speaker and the number of illegal interventions made by MPs in five debates

	Debate 1		Debate 2		Debate 3		Debate 4		Debate 5	
Topic	Education		Age of Consent		Position of Trust		Foreign Affairs		Report (Racism in police)	
Speaker	Male deputy Speaker		Male deputy Speaker		Male deputy Speaker		Male deputy Speaker		Male deputy Speaker	
Number of interventions by Speaker	1		2		2		4		4	
Number of Illegal interventions By MPs	7		5		21		4		4	
	M 6	F 1	M 5	F 0	M 20	F 1	M 4	F 0	M 2	F 2

The Speaker may intervene in a debate for many different reasons other than to tell an MP not to speak out of turn. The different functions of the Speaker's interventions in the five debates and the number of interventions for each function are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8: The number and functions of the Speaker's interventions in five debates

Function of Speakers' intervention	Number of interventions in five debates
To tell MPs to keep to the topic of debate	3
To tell MPs not to speak out of turn	2
To ask for clarification (e.g. Is an MP giving way or not?)	2
To correct the language used by MPs	4
To announce something	1
Error by Speaker	1
Total interventions	13

Of the 13 interventions made by the deputy Speakers in debates, only two of the interventions were made in order to tell an IMP not to speak ‘out of turn’. One of these interventions by the deputy Speaker is in debate 3 and is shown in Transcript 8 below.

Transcript 8: An intervention by the Speaker (debate 3, Video extract 3)

CMP M(C): perhaps those of us who feel <u>strongly</u> about this should	1
take to the streets (.) and demonstrate (.) that er we will not er	2
IMP M (C): in favour or <u>against</u>	3
CMP M(C): will not support er support moving any further on this issue	4
IMP M (C): <u>against</u> (.) <u>against</u> (.) <u>against</u> (.)	5
CMP M(C): against what	6
IMP M (C): they were demonstrating against	7
CMP M(C): they were dem they were <u>demonstrating against</u>	8
SP M : o o <u>order order order order order</u> we can’t have private conversations	9
of this kind could I ask the honourable ge (2)	10
IMP M (L) : he’s still doing it	11
SP M : could I ask the honourable gentleman who is <u>addressing</u> the	12
house to remember that he must address the <u>contents</u> of the Bill	13
<u>before</u> us (.) Mr Gerald Howarth	14
IMP (L) : stupid	15
CMP M(C): Mr Deputy Speaker I <u>was</u> addressing the com er the the the	16
er (.) the contents of the Bill (1)	17
SP M : I think the Honourable Gentleman must let <u>me</u> be the judge of that (1)	18
CMP M(C): o o of <u>course</u> Mr Deputy Speaker (.) I er I I (.) all I was seeking to	19
point <u>out</u> was (CMP continues turn)	20

This intervention is made by the deputy Speaker for two reasons, firstly because the CMP is carrying on a ‘private conversation’, and secondly because he is speaking about a topic not covered in the particular Bill being considered. It seems that the deputy Speaker is intervening for both these reasons, but of the two, the instruction to ‘address the contents of the Bill’ (line 13) appears to be the strongest reason for the intervention.

The second example of the deputy Speaker stopping an IMP from intervening is shown in Transcript 9 below. The illegal intervention itself is not audible on the video recording, and is only recorded as an ‘interruption’ in the Hansard report.

Transcript 9: An intervention by the Speaker (debate 4)

CMP M(C): the right honourable gentleman knows <u>perfectly</u> well	1
that I was <u>not</u> saying that about the speech of my <u>Honourable</u> friend	2
IMPS M : [shouting]	3
CMP M(C): and and I <u>do</u> have to say to the right honourable gentleman that that	4
Colonel Spicer and <u>anybody</u> else seeking to supply weapons	5
or arms to Sierra Leone would have known perfectly well (.)as the	6
Select committee itself said (.) that there was <u>domestic</u> legislation	7
in place	8
SP : o o order there’s a lot of <u>noise</u> in the chamber and it is particularly	9
coming from Mr <u>Bercow</u> (.) Mr Bercow can I say that you are	10
trying my patience (.)I’ve got to <u>hear</u> what the right honourable	11
gentleman is saying	12
CMP M (C): (Continues speech)	13

In this example the deputy Speaker censures an IMP for speaking out of turn (Lines 9-12), but it appears that this admonition is motivated more by the Speaker’s need to hear what happens in the chamber, than his desire to censure the IMP for speaking out of turn. These examples show that on the two occasions that the Speakers intervene to stop an out of turn intervention this is carried out in conjunction with another reason to stop the proceedings. It is therefore clear that the Speakers mainly tolerate illegal interventions in debates. Transcript 7 in section 5.5. shows the turn taking rules being overtly broken to the detriment of the CMP. On line 17 of Transcript 7 (p.140) there is a pause after the second interruption where MPs laugh at the content of the illegal turn. This provides the Speaker with an opportunity to restore order to the chamber but he does not do so, forcing the CMP to try and regain the floor by appealing to the IMP.

As the Speakers stop only 5% of all illegal interventions, it is evident that an MP who wants to make an illegal contribution can do so without much fear of being censured. This also means that the gap between the legal or ideal debate form (in which interruptions would not occur, or would always be stopped by the Speaker) and the reality of what actually happens in debates is very wide. Though the ideal form of debates exists to ensure all MPs have equal rights to be heard, the actual form is one in which inequalities between MPs occur, because some MPs gain more turns by intervening illegally.

Apart from interventions to stop MPs speaking out of turn, of the 13 interventions made by the Speakers in the five debates four were to correct the language of CMPs. The first of these interventions is shown in Transcript 10 below.

Transcript 10: An intervention by the Speaker (debate 1, Video extract 4)

CMP M(D):	the Select Committee has <u>recognised</u> the problems of FE funding (.)	1
	and the new resources it proposes <u>are</u> exceedingly welcome (.) <u>but</u> (.)	2
	I believe that the treasury has <u>seduced</u> the select committee (.) and	3
	its expectations as er <u>not</u> obviously the Honourable member for	4
	<u>Barking</u> Mr Deputy Speaker (.) I would <u>never</u> accuse anyone of	5
	seducing er seducing <u>her</u> (.) but um (.) sh she she is far no no she (1)	6
MPS	:	[laughter] 7
	I I think at this point I will move on but um (1)	8
MPS	:	[laughter] 9
SP	: <u>order</u> (.) perhaps it would be helpful if the honourable gentleman	10
	found another <u>simile</u> (.) Mister Willetts (1)	11
MPS	:	[laughter] 12
CMP M(L)	: I I <u>do</u> believe I <u>do</u> believe that the hand of the Treasury has <u>been</u>	13
	on Labour members in the select <u>committee</u> (.) and er	14
1MP	: that's worse	15
CMP M(L)	: no it isn't (.) um and that in fact what the Honourable Member for	16
	Barking was in fact er <u>honest</u> enough to say that <u>she</u> did not feel that	17
	they'd gone far enough (CMP CONTINUES)	18

In this intervention, the Speaker asks the CMP to use another ‘simile’ because the words ‘seduce’ could be related to the MP for Barking, Margaret Hodge. The literal meaning of the word ‘seduced’ is brought to the attention of the Speaker by the laughter of MPs in the chamber, and was not the meaning intended by the CMP. MPs in the chamber attempt to perpetuate this ‘joke’ by making another double entendre on the words of the CMP in line 13 of the transcript above, ‘the hand of the Treasury has been on Labour Members’. The CMP successfully ignores these IMPs and continues with the speech. The Speaker’s intervention in this instance seems to be motivated by the need to keep the debate on serious issues and to stop possibly offensive comments.

The second intervention by the Speaker to correct the language of an MP is in the fourth debate where an MP is admonished for saying that another MP ‘connived’ in order to achieve something. The use of the word ‘connive’ is derogatory to the MP in question and therefore falls into the category of ‘unparliamentary language’. Any words that are deemed offensive to other MPs by the Speaker can be classified as ‘unparliamentary’. Unparliamentary Language also includes the use of informal address forms rather than the formal ‘Right Honourable Lady/Gentleman’ which is used in conjunction with the third person singular pronoun, ‘she’ or ‘he’, rather than the more direct second person singular pronoun, ‘you’. The third and fourth examples of interventions by the Speaker to correct unparliamentary language are shown in Transcript 11 below.

Transcript 11: Sustained interventions by the Speaker (debate 4, Video extract 5)

CMP F(L) : the problem the police <u>faced</u> (.) was the fact that they were	1
institutionally <u>racist</u> (.) institutionally <u>incompetent</u> <u>and</u>	2
institutionally <u>corrupt</u> and I <u>would</u> say that <u>corruption</u> is the twin	3
brother of <u>racism</u> (.) and it affects us <u>all</u> and this <u>why</u> the debate	4
is so <u>important</u> (.) and the <u>Lawrence</u> inquiry is so important for <u>white</u>	5
people as well as <u>black</u> people	6
IMP M(C) : would the right Honourable Lady give way	7
CMP F(L) : yes	8
IMP M(C) : I’m very <u>grateful</u> to the Honourable Lady (.) the Honourable Lady	9

is telling this House is she the police suffers from 10
institutionalised corruption (.) leaving aside that outrageous claim (.) 11
doesn't she realise that by blaming an institution collectively (.) by 12
assuming there is some unconscious collective guilt (.) she is letting 13
off the hook (.) those officers who are certainly guilty of these charges 14
(.) because they are hiding behind the very sort of collective allegations 15
that she makes 16

CMP F(L) : thank you (.) well if we can look at the issue you raise by perhaps 17
taking another -ism and another institution (.) just to see whether (.) 18
the point you make is correct or not (.) 19

CMP F(L) : oh I'm sorry 20

SP : o o order 21
: the Honourable Lady must use the correct parliamentary language 22

CMP F(L) : Mr Deputy Speaker I suffer from an inability to get that into my mind 23
even after two years in this house (.) yes um the Honourable Gentleman 24
er opposite um will perhaps look at another example we can use 25
another -ism I was saying and a another institution lets take sexism (.) 26
and lets take (.) er parliament lets take the House of Commons (.) lets 27
look across the benches here (.) and in fact when the Home Secretary 28
rose to his feet there was one woman opposite and twenty-six men (.) 29
on the opposition benches (.) now surely you would not deny 30
that that means we have an institution which is biased against 31
women (.) would the Honourable Gentleman deny that I presume 32
he would not (.) now equally equally (.) so you would say (.) well I 33
sorry the Honourable Gentleman 34

SP : order the Honourable Lady must think carefully before she chooses 35
her words (1) 36

CMP F(L) : absolutely right er (.) Mr Deputy Speaker er the Honourable 37
Gentleman just said yes he would deny that there is a discrimination 38
against women when effectively there are no women well two women 39
at this moment in time sitting on the benches opposite 40
(Speech Continues)

In this transcript the CMP refers to the intervening MP as 'you' four times (lines 17, 19, 30 and 33). The deputy Speaker corrects her twice (lines 22 and 35). The use of the pronoun 'you' in this transcript directs the CMP's speech towards the

IMP ‘now surely you would not deny..’ (line 30). This question does initiate a response from the IMP who says or indicates that he would deny the point that the CMP is making (this is indicated only by context and is not evident in the video or Hansard report). In comparison to the lack of interventions made by the Speakers to correct out of turn utterances, this Speaker appears vigilant in respect of preserving the correct forms of address. Using the ‘you’ address form is linked to the turn taking mechanism as its use directly requests a response (and gains one) from the MP who is sitting down. The preservation of the formal address system by the Speaker therefore preserves the non-interactive form of the debate.

The analysis of the Speakers’ interventions shows that the debate rules are only minimally enforced. The tolerance of the Speakers towards rule breaking may partially be explained by the fact that they do not hear everything that is said in the debating chamber and therefore do not always hear illegal interventions. Another reason may be that the Speakers may use gesture and gaze signals to warn MPs that they have noticed their illegal behaviour, and therefore do not always need to stop the debate on a point of order. However these considerations do not account for the degree to which the breaking of rules, in particular concerning illegal interventions, are tolerated by the Speaker. The finding that illegal interventions are largely tolerated by the Speaker is significant in that if illegal interventions advantage MPs in debates, and male MPs make more illegal interventions than female MPs, then this effectively disadvantages female MPs in debates.

5.7. Conclusions

The analysis of the debate floor revealed that there is a single floor which consists of two turn-taking systems: the legal D1 system and the illegal D2 system. Although the ideal form of debates and the official rules exist to ensure MPs’ legal turns are preserved, violations of these rules are common and legal turns are interrupted. The analysis of turn-taking in five debates showed that although both male and female MPs participate in proportion to their overall representation in legal ‘give way’ interventions, illegal interventions are mostly made by male

MPs. These findings are similar to those of Carole Edelsky and Karen Adams (1990) and Lyn Kathlene (1994, 1995) who found that male politicians violated turn-taking rules more than women politicians in U.S. televised debates and U.S. state committee hearings respectively¹³.

As shown in the transcripts in this chapter, illegal interventions serve to interfere with the turn-taking mechanism of the D1, and can be used to criticise or challenge a CMP in a debate. Given that power in this context has been defined as control over the limited resource of the floor, this means that male MPs have more control over the interaction (through illegal interventions), and therefore more power in debates than female MPs. In interviews female MPs identified illegal interventions and cheering as a male activity in which they did not engage, which further suggests that norms of interaction are different for male and female MPs. This indicates that in this case men and women belong to the same 'Community of Practice' (CoP) (Eckert and McConnell Ginet 1992: 95) but on different terms of participation according to gender.

The norms of male MPs' discourse styles are pervasive in debates, as the gendered behaviour of contributing illegally to debates is often not censured by the Speaker and therefore has to some degree been accepted as a norm of interaction. The finding that masculine discourse styles are treated as the interactional norm in debates relates to the fact that traditionally women have not been represented in this institution and continue to be under-represented. The discourse styles were invented by men and the culture of the House of Commons continues to create an environment in which female MPs do not have access to the same interactional repertoire as male MPs. Although this is partly volitional on the part of female MPs as some of them state that they do not want to take part in illegal interventions, there may also be a strong male culture in debates which excludes female MPs from participating in these rule-breaking activities.

The male culture in debates is evidenced by sexist comments and barracking (for example the use of the word 'seduced' in Transcript 10 (p.148), and the use of the word 'girl' by the Speaker in Transcript 1 (p.139) that treat women as sexual objects or juveniles. There are also examples of male MPs breaking down the D1

turn-taking system into two-way exchanges that effectively take away the rights of the CMP to a legal speaking turn (for example in Transcript 7, p.139). In these instances (as observed in section 5.5.2.1.), sexist comments and the flouting of rules may serve to reinforce male authority and therefore marginalise female MPs. Chapter Seven seeks to examine the use of humour and irony by MPs, which may also establish a male culture in debates, and to identify the effect these practices have on the rights of female MPs.

Male MPs are rewarded in their rule-breaking activities by gaining an interactional advantage. Judith Baxter's (1999a, 1999b) research on public speaking in schools is relevant here as she finds that boys break rules more than girls, that this is a marker of dominant behaviour, and that boys and girls can expect different outcomes from rule-breaking:

One of the most powerful ways in which the discourse of gender differentiation constructs teenage female identity within the classroom setting is in terms of its expectation that girls should abide by 'the rules' and conform to the codes of classroom conduct, whereas boys are not necessarily expected to do so. Furthermore, girls receive few if any 'Brownie points' for good behaviour and may be penalised if they misbehave, whereas boys may be paradoxically rewarded for transgressing the rules, such as when they are awarded speaking turns when they call out. (1999b: 233).

As noted in Chapter Two, Baxter observes that there are no rewards for girls' rule-breaking or their dominant behaviour in interaction where speaking turns are contested: they do not gain speaking turns and there is no incentive for girls to behave dominantly and risk being perceived as 'bad girls'. The finding that male MPs engage in rule-breaking activities can be explained by their subsequent 'reward' of the floor. The finding that women participate in legal interventions but not in rule-breaking illegal interventions may be explained by their desire not to be perceived negatively by others (as they *could* gain the 'reward' of the floor if they intervened¹⁴).

Penelope Eckert (1998) suggests some explanations for women's adherence to norms and rules. She reports the findings of her research on phonological variation in two CoPs of U.S. high school adolescents ('Jocks' and 'Burnouts').

This study showed that it was girls (rather than boys) in the two CoPs who were responsible for using the most standard variants in the CoP which valued standard language, and the most non-standard variants in the CoP which valued non-standard language. She concluded that: 'the constraints on girls to conform to an exaggerated social category type are clearly related to their diminished possibilities for claiming membership or category status' (1998: 73).

This conformity may be realised by other forms of linguistic behaviour (including turn-taking), and related to different types of CoPs. Eckert argues that women moving into prestigious occupations and especially elite institutions 'are generally seen as interlopers and are at greater pains to prove that they belong' (1998: 67). With this 'interloper' status, women are more subject than men to negative judgements about superficial aspects of their behaviour (such as dress, or style of speech)¹⁵. The way in which women can 'prove their worthiness' is 'meticulous attention to symbolic capital' (1998: 67). She notes that:

While men develop a sense of themselves and find a place in the world on the basis of their actions and abilities, women have to focus on the production of selves – to develop authority through continual proof of worthiness (1998: 73).

Women MPs' avoidance of rule-breaking (or meticulous adherence to the rules) can therefore be viewed as one of ways in which women MPs make sure they are 'beyond reproach' in a CoP which views them as 'outsiders'.

Notes

¹ As noted in Chapter 3 (section 3.5.1., p.70), overlaps between main speakers are uncommon, but overlapping utterances between the MP giving the speech and other MPs speaking in the chamber (illegally) are common.

² These five debates are taken from the 60-hour video data corpus. The debates selected for this analysis are marked with a '*' in the list of all speech events in the corpus (Appendix 3, pp361)

³ The debate on the Stephen Lawrence enquiry took place on 29/03/99. The main issue debated was the finding of the report that there was 'institutional racism' in the Metropolitan Police that had contributed to the failure of the police to find the killer of the black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, after he was stabbed to death in South London.

⁴ This comment was made by Jackie Ballard who was interviewed on 13/04/99. She is a Liberal Democrat MP who was first elected in 1997 (see Appendix 2, Interview B lines 30-40, p.324-5)

⁵ Other comments made on the subject of give way interventions include a backbench Labour women MP who reported having difficulties intervening on a male MP's speech. In this case the MP was helped by another MP from her own party, who illegally intervened upon her behalf by shouting 'give way' (Appendix 2, Interview A, lines 160-170). The same MP also describes a group of MPs giving supportive interventions to a colleague who was proposing a Private Member's Bill because 'we had to keep it going' (lines 187-191). In this case the give way interventions were a direct show of support for the CMP.

⁶ See Appendix 3, p.361 for a full list of speech events and their duration in the full data corpus.

⁷ Any speech event that was not PMQT or DQT was put into the category of 'debates'. It therefore includes Private Notice Questions, Private Member's Bills, and Statements by government Ministers, as well as different types of debates.

⁸ The overall participation shown in Table 3 (Male MPs 96%, female MPs 4%) does not allow for the fact that the Prime Minister has half of the turns in PMQT sessions. For this reason Questions and responses have been shown separately.

⁹ The 'boyish' comment and the observation that shouting in PMQTs was 'less noticeable' was made by Jackie Ballard (Appendix 2, Interview B lines 84 and 71 respectively). The comment about waving the order papers was made by a female Labour backbench MP (Interview A, line 425).

¹⁰ An exception to this is evident in the corpus of five debates when a male Labour MP says 'Oh rubbish Winterton, you really are a silly man' in a legal give way intervention (Transcript 7, lines 15-16, p.139) However, this is not attack upon a CMP, but on an MP who is intervening illegally.

¹¹ This occurred on 13/07/98 (See Appendix 3, p.361).

¹² Referring to 'Dolly the sheep', the first animal ever to be cloned in 1998. The comment occurred on 13th July, 1998.

¹³ Edelsky and Adams (1990) also found that male politicians broke rules constraining the topic of the debate more than women politicians.

¹⁴ The fact that women MPs *can* be rewarded by gaining the floor illegally is shown in Transcript 5, lines 5-6 (p.137) where a woman MP makes an illegal intervention and gains a response from the CMP.

¹⁵ The observation that women are 'interlopers' who are more subject to the negative effects of gender stereotyping can be related to Kanter's (1977) idea of tokenism, and Yoder's (1991: 183) observation that studies of tokenism in gender inappropriate occupations have found that women 'experience performance pressures, isolation, and role encapsulation, but men do not' (see Chapter Two, section 2.3.3. p.51)

Chapter Six: The use of adversarial linguistic features in parliamentary Question Time sessions

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I investigate the adversarial style commonly said to exist in the House of Commons as a set of linguistic practices that may be acquired and used differently by female and male MPs. This line of inquiry is prompted firstly by the findings of previous research into male and female speech styles in public contexts. In her investigation into the linguistic contributions made by male and female managers in groups, Susan Case (1988) assessed the frequency of 34 speech variables related to gender in the speech of each manager. She then identified two speech styles that correlated with the sex of the participants. She characterised the speech style used mainly by women as a facilitative, personal style and the speech style used mainly by men as being an assertive, authoritative style. Coates (1994:72) claims that it is this assertive, authoritative style that has become the established norm in public life as a result of the gendered nature of the public-private divide. Therefore:

Women are linguistically at a double disadvantage when entering the public domain: first they are (normally) less skilful at using the adversarial, information-focused style expected in such contexts; second, the more (co-operative) discourse styles which they *are* fluent in are negatively valued in such contexts. (Coates 1994: 73).

Research projects such as those of Case (1988) and Coates (1994) suggest that there is a male, adversarial style in public contexts. The House of Commons is traditionally male-dominated and is typically described as being 'adversarial'; it is also more public than the managers' group meetings described above and has more overtly oppositional aims. Therefore it is possible that if male and female speakers do have different discourse practices in public contexts, the differences will be particularly prominent in the debating forum.

As well as contributing to the growing body of research into male and female talk in public contexts, an analysis of the adversarial or consensual linguistic practices in debates will contribute to the description of the House of Commons itself as a

setting for speech. Although the House of Commons is frequently referred to as an adversarial forum this part of the thesis aims to identify with more precision the linguistic features that actually make exchanges adversarial. The main questions explored in this chapter therefore are: Is it possible to identify adversarial linguistic features in the speeches of MPs? And if there is an adversarial style, is there variation in the use of adversarial features by male and female MPs?

Assessing the extent to which adversarial features are used in debates will also advance the discussion of the contribution that women bring to public life. The increased numbers of women in the House of Commons since 1997 has led to speculation about the changes that this shift in representation will bring. Typically, women are thought to bring a more 'consensual' style to politics. The analysis of adversarial (or possibly consensual) features in the speeches of male and female MPs may refute or support these claims.

In the following sections, the question will be posed as to whether an adversarial style can be identified and whether this is used by speakers in Prime Minister's Question Times (PMQT) and Departmental Question Times (DQT). PMQT and DQT sessions are particularly suitable for this analysis: they are considered to be more adversarial than debates because they offer MPs in all parties the opportunity to scrutinise government policies. In section 6.2. previous linguistic research that may be useful in identifying an adversarial style is reviewed. In section 6.3. transcripts from PMQT sessions are analysed in order to identify adversarial features. In section 6.4. transcripts from question time sessions are analysed in order to establish whether the use of adversarial features varies between speakers, and in section 6.5. a data corpus of PMQT and DQT sessions is analysed to establish whether variation in the use of adversarial features exists according to the gender and parliamentary status of MPs.

6.2. Linguistic Features that may Constitute an Adversarial Style in the House of Commons.

6.2.1. Questions and responses

Previous research into political discourse has involved the analysis of political interviews (Dillon 1990; Harris 1989; Heritage 1985; Jucker 1986; Wilson 1990). This body of work is mainly concerned with the ways in which politicians evade answering questions, or the audience perception created by politicians in interviews. The ways in which politicians interact with their audiences and invite applause in party political conferences has also been studied (Atkinson 1984 and 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986). The construction of questions and responses in political interviews is relevant to this chapter as it may relate to the way in which MPs construct adversarial questions using presuppositions and assertions (Harris 1986) and the responses they induce in parliamentary question time sessions.

Questions have been identified as a linguistic feature that can constrain the response of witnesses in the courtroom. The Anglo-American adversarial model of courtroom procedure creates a context in which there is a 'war of words, a battle between two opposing sides, each of which contends that its interpretation of events is correct' (Danet and Bogoch 1980: 36). Much of the research into the language of trials is concerned with the way in which the asymmetrical power relations between lawyers and witnesses is evidenced in questions and responses (Drew 1992; O'Barr and Atkins 1980). Sandra Harris's (1984) research on the questions used in a magistrate's court identifies the way in which particular question forms are more conducive to gaining a particular response. A conducive question takes more interactive work to challenge than it does to assent to in the same way that a dispreferred response is linguistically marked and is more difficult to produce than a preferred response in Sack's and Schegloff's (1974) account of preference organisation. Sandra Harris's (1984) research into questions as a mode of control in a magistrate's court found that conducive questions were highly assertive strategies used for coercing agreement that were typical of situations of unequal power relations between participants. An example of the

type of question that Harris found Magistrates used was 'You're not making much effort to pay that off are you?', where the proposition is intact and is made interrogative by the question tag. In this case, the form of the question and the context of the court (in which magistrates have much more power than defendants) would mean that the question is conducive to the defendant answering 'no' to the question.

Harris's findings showed that most of the questions used by the magistrates only required a yes/no answer, and even the Wh-questions only required the respondent to supply a one-word response giving the necessary information (1984: 14). Some syntactic forms are more conducive than others however (1984: 17), and Harris found that declaratives with tags (for example 'that means you've got to pay thirteen pounds, doesn't it?'), declaratives asking for confirmation (for example 'you're unemployed?'), disjunctive interrogatives ('are you married or single?'), declaratives with a negative interrogative frame ('don't you think you ought to have sent it back?') accounted for a large proportion of questions used in the court by magistrates. Danet and Bogoch (1980) also examined the use of questions in court, and found that 75% of all the questions were of a highly conducive form, being either yes/no questions or declaratives.

John Wilson's pragmatic analysis of political language (1990) includes a chapter on political questions which incorporates research into parliamentary question time sessions. He explores the function and formal nature of questions and responses in relation to how the pragmatic analysis of questions may be utilised in the analysis of what politicians say (Wilson 1990: 178). The focus of Wilson's research is not on how politicians use adversarial language, but his analysis of the question types used by politicians in these sessions provides useful examples of how 'yes/no' conducive question forms can constrain answers. Wilson (1990: 146) found that out of a total of 139 parliamentary questions, 116 were yes/no questions and only 23 Wh-type questions.

Wilson also draws on the work of Schiffrin (1987) to provide an analysis of the function of particular discourse items, such as 'well', 'so' and 'will' within questioning exchanges. For example 'so' can act as 'an instruction to interpret the

proposition it introduces as a logical consequence' (Blakemore 1987: 87). It is therefore more difficult to deny the presupposition from which the question follows as a logical consequence. Additionally contracted negatives in the initial position of a yes/no question are 'used to suggest that the proposition under question is one which is taken to be true (taken for granted)' (Wilson 1990: 141). Wilson suggests that the use of 'so' and the contracted negative are linguistic structures that can account for the 'leading' nature of questions (1990: 141).

Wilson (1990: 146) also found 'will' was used in questions 47 times out of a total of 139 questions. Usually it is used with a third person as the addressee and its use indicates that the action mentioned should be carried out. Additionally, 'will' is more polite than other modals such as 'can' and therefore 'with increased politeness as a variable, rejecting any indirect request made through the interrogative use of 'will' creates a problem situation for the respondent' (Wilson 1990: 152). The increased politeness marking carried with the use of 'will' makes this a useful discourse marker for making any refusal or rejection more difficult for the respondent (Schiffrin 1987). This may be the reason it is frequently used in Question Time sessions as it places political opponents under increased pressure.

Opponents are also pressurised by the number of propositions in questions. Harris's (1986) research into questions in political interviews identifies the assertions and presuppositions in different questions taken from political interviews. These types of questions typically contain many propositions and the question itself is often prefaced by a number of controversial statements. This means that:

If politicians attend to the propositions contained in these pre/post statements they may be seen as trying to avoid the question. On the other hand, if politicians fail to attend to such propositions they may be seen as accepting certain controversial claims as matters of fact.
(Wilson 1990: 137).

Therefore the number of propositions in questions can increase the pressure upon the respondent because they must respond to more information than just a single question. The number of presuppositions in a question and the way in which an

MP formulates their response to this type of question may contribute to an adversarial style.

6.2.2. Pronominal use.

The analysis of pronoun usage can show how individuals identify themselves and their arguments in opposition to others. For example Van Dijk's (1998) research on categories for the critical analysis of parliamentary debates about immigration suggests that pronouns are used in debates as 'referring to in-groups and out-groups of various kinds' (1998: 7). This means that an analysis of pronominal use can indicate group identities and group allegiances. For example, as Van Dijk points out, the pronoun 'we' may be used to refer to any group the speaker identifies with such as "we MPs", 'we Dutch', 'we Protestants', 'we in our party' and so on. The use of pronouns and the establishment and reinforcement of allegiances by referring to 'us' and 'them' is part of the way in which 'pro' and 'con' opposing stances are established and reinforced. Therefore this type of pronoun usage can be viewed as a linguistic feature that contributes to an adversarial style.

Case (1998) also investigated pronominal usage as part of her study into the speech of female and male managers in meetings. She assessed the frequency of 34 speech variables in each manager's speech. The extent to which an individual consistently employed certain linguistic features and patterns determined his or her predominant communication style. One of the male 'traits' that Case identifies as being authoritative in function and 'emphatic' in style was the use of third person pronouns to depersonalise statements. In her study the male managers used 70.8% of the third person pronouns and female managers used only 29.2%.

However, as noted in previously, the use of pronouns in the House of Commons is constrained. MPs cannot refer directly to each other (by using the second person pronoun 'you'), and must address their comments to each other through the Speaker by using the address term 'Madam Speaker' or 'Mr Deputy Speaker'. They are further constrained by the fact that they must refer to each other through the Speaker using particular address forms 'My Right Honourable Friend' (a first

person possessive form) to refer to someone who belongs to the same political party and 'the Right Honourable Lady/Gentleman' to refer to someone of a different political party. The use of third person pronouns to depersonalise statements as an adversarial feature is therefore not applicable to debates because only third person address forms are permitted. The rules in the debating chamber about the use of depersonalised third person address forms have been devised in order to make exchanges less direct, less personal and therefore less adversarial. This itself suggests that the forum is adversarial, as participants must be linguistically constrained to maintain order.

6.2.3. Imperative forms and directives.

Imperative constructions may also contribute to an adversarial style. Case (1998: 48) found that in the group of managers she studied, imperative constructions were associated with the authoritative and emphatic masculine speech style and were used overwhelmingly by the male participants (91.7% of the imperative constructions came from men). In a similar way, Jennifer Coates's (1994) research on male and female discourse styles in professional contexts identifies the use of the speech act 'directive' as a powerful device: 'Typically powerful participants will demonstrate their power (i.e. their ability to ignore the face-needs of their addressees) by using direct commands' (1994: 76). Coates's research focuses upon interactions between professionals and lay-people (such as doctors and patients), rather than between all-professional groups as in the House of Commons. However, her classification of blunt and mitigated directive forms may provide useful in the analysis of imperative constructions in relation to an adversarial style.

6.2.4. The relation of previous work to parliamentary speech events

Although it is useful to identify possible adversarial linguistic features such as imperatives and directives from research involving a range of genres, it is clear that debates and question time sessions in the House of Commons have many characteristics that are specific to debate forums or that only occur in this particular debating chamber. This particular genre is more adversarial than most

which is evidenced by a number of non-linguistic features of the chamber. The main political parties directly face each other across the benches in a typically combative way, and MPs may not cross lines on the floor (two swords' width apart) that were originally put in place in order to prevent MPs from duelling in the chamber. Linguistic constraints are placed upon MPs including the indirect mode of address they must adopt and the prohibition of the use of taboo words or unparliamentary language. This means that MPs have to develop strategies in order to be adversarial without breaking these rules. Finally, in common with other debating chambers an oppositional stance is part of the speech event itself and 'failure to show a certain degree of confrontation in these contexts would be noteworthy as these are typically contests with winners and losers and not interactions with compromise' (Adams 1999: 236). These factors contribute to the context of the speech event appearing exceptionally adversarial, in some ways resembling a pugilistic arena rather than a political assembly. It would be surprising therefore if an adversarial linguistic style was not evident in the analysis of debate speeches.

Given the unique contextual features of this debating chamber it is to be expected that any adversarial linguistic style will contain some features that are specific to this context. Research cited above in particular in the context of managers' meetings (Case 1988), and of directives in professional discourse (Coates 1994) are only of limited value to the present research as the constraints placed upon speakers in parliamentary discourse and the functions of the discourse itself are completely different. Having suggested some possible linguistic features that may constitute an adversarial style, it is now possible to analyse transcripts of speeches from the debating chamber in order to identify whether these (or other) features are present, and also whether their function is actually adversarial. In order to identify as many features as possible that may constitute an adversarial style, Question Time sessions which are commonly regarded as the most adversarial type of interaction in the chamber are analysed in section 6.3.

6.3. Identifying Adversarial Features in PMQT Exchanges

In this section linguistic features that may constitute an adversarial style are identified by analysing transcripts from Question Time sessions in the House of Commons. As noted in Chapter Four, Question Times allow government and opposition backbenchers the opportunity to challenge and scrutinise the actions of government Ministers. As well as allowing backbench MPs a greater level of involvement than in most debates, this is also a time when all MPs can attempt to reveal the limitations and mistakes made by government Ministers.

Ministers must be given notice of a question a fortnight before it is put to them in the chamber. However, a questioner may ask a supplementary question for which no notice is given. It is common for vague questions to be asked first, followed by a much more specific supplementary question (Davis 1997: 52). This means that a Minister can be asked a question for which they are unprepared. Frequently the supplementary question is barely related to the original question and asks about an entirely different topic in order to take the Minister by surprise and gain a political advantage.

When question time starts the Speaker calls the MP whose question is first on the order paper. That MP stands up and says 'number one, Madam Speaker'; the Minister then stands up and answers the question. As the Minister finishes answering, MPs who wish to ask supplementary questions stand up to signal their intention to the Speaker. The MP who asked the original question is usually asked to speak first. A number of supplementary questions are sometimes allowed by the Speaker and this is the opportunity for opposition MPs to highlight weaknesses in government policy.

PMQT is typically described as the most adversarial speech event in parliament. This is because the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have a number of exchanges about government policy in relation to topical issues. It is also the session that gets the most coverage in the press, and is usually one of the few times in the week that parliament is broadcast on TV and radio news. For this reason, transcripts of exchanges between the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and the

Leader of the opposition, William Hague, are analysed below in order to identify the linguistic features that may constitute an adversarial style.

Transcript 12: Exchange between William Hague and Tony Blair (PMQT 03/03/99, Video extract 6)

Key: WH = William Hague PM = Prime Minister MPs = noises made
by a group of MPs

(.) = pause of less than a second (1) = timed pause in seconds

Underline = particular emphasis on word or syllable

(laughs) = noises or gestures made by the CMP

[hear hear] = noises made by a group of MPs

- 1 WH : Madam Speaker (1) may I first of all asso (.) may I first of all associate the
2 opposition with the remarks of the Prime Minister about the tragic events in
3 Uganda (.) on a subject closer to home (.) the Prime Minister may recall that
4 he and I received a letter from a (.) Mr Nelson an NHS patient who's been
5 told to wait eighty weeks to see a consultant in a trauma and orthopaedic
6 clinic (.) will the Prime Minister confirm that people waiting in this way of
7 whom there are many more in the last two years (.) do not appear on the
8 waiting list figures that were published yesterday (1)
- 9PM : Madam Speaker the waiting list figures (.) are published and calculated in
10 precisely the same way under this government as under the previous
11 government (.) and we are partly as a result of money over and above what the
MPs [hear hear]
- 12 Conservatives promised for the National Health Service (.) bringing waiting
13 lists down (1)
- MPs [hear hear]
- 14WH : Madam Speaker they are calculated in the same way and they show that waiting
15 lists are higher under this government after two years (.) and they show that the
16 real scandal is the number of people waiting to be on waiting lists (.) like Mr
MPs : [hear hear]
- 17 Nelson (.) which is double what it was two years ago (.) and isn't the truth this
18 that there are now nearly half a million people waiting for hospital appointments
19 (.) as a direct result of managing the National Health Service for the sake of

20 appearances instead of for the sake of patients (.) and aren't the government
MPs [hear hear]

21 now just spinning the figures and playing with politics instead of serving the
22 patients (1)
MPs [hear hear]

23PM : no Madam Speaker (.) first of all I'm grateful for his confirmation that we
24 are indeed calculating the figures in precisely the same way as the last
25 government (.) since since his shadow health spokesman has been saying the
MPs : [laughter]

26 opposite for month upon month (.) secondly we have brought down health
27 service waiting lists after years of rising lists (.) and as for the number of out-
28 patients (.) I can actually give him the latest figures (.) that during the third
29 quarter of nineteen eighty eight nineteen ninety eight ninety nine (.) there
30 were sixty eight thousand more treated than in the previous quarter (1)
MPs [hear hear]

31WH : well I'll give him the figures too Madam Speaker (.) four hundred and sixty
32 eight thousand people (.) waiting for hospital appointments compared to two
33 hundred and forty eight thousand only two years ago (.) they calculate the
34 figures in the same way but they have moved people who would have been on
35 waiting lists to waiting to be on the waiting list (.) and the chair the chairman of
MPs : [hear hear]

36 the BMA consultants committee has said it himself he says if all you are
37 doing (.) is shortening your waiting list for operations and waiting lists to see a
38 consultant are going up (.) then your proper waiting list is getting longer (.) so
39 shouldn't he stop spending a hundred and fifty million pounds dragooning
40 GPs into new bureaucracies (.) and concentrate it on this instead (.) and reduce
MPs : [hear hear]

41 the real waiting lists in our health service (2)
MPs : [hear hear]

42PM : no Madam speaker because he is actually wrong on both counts (.) not merely
43 are we treating more out-patients than before (.) we are also treating several
44 hundred thousand more patients (.) so for both in-patient and out-patient lists
45 we are treating more people (.) in addition from the first of April (.) this
46 government is going to introduce twenty one billion pounds extra spending in
47 the National Health Service (.) having sorted out the mess left behind us (.) by
48 the Tories (.) that twenty one billion pounds (.) is opposed by his party (.)
MPs [hear hear]

49 described as reckless and irresponsible (.) and that is why this country will
50 trust us not him with the health service

Transcript 13: Second exchange between William Hague and Tony Blair
(PMQT:03/03/99, Video extract 7)

1 WH : Madam Speaker (.) three weeks ago (.) three weeks ago at Question Time the
2 Prime Minister failed to answer the question of by how much has he increased
3 taxes in the last two budgets (.) in fact he said business (.) business tax has
4 come down under this government (.) the CBI say in their budget submission
5 to the chancellor (.) that taxes on businesses are up by five billion pounds a
6 year (.) so who is telling the truth him or the CBI
7 PM : Madam speaker (.) actually the CBI has welcomed our reform of tax (.) and er
MPs : [shouting]
8 yes they have (.) and (.) if he is (.) if he is talking (.) if he talking about the
MPs : [shouting]
9 reform of tax credits (.) of course that will yield from the next couple of years
10 onwards (.) a four billion pound tax cut for business (.) I assume it is his
11 policy to reverse that (.) policy now (.) in which case in which case it'll be
12 interesting to know how he pays for it (.) but it is under this government that
13 corporation tax and small business tax are the lowest they've ever been (1)
MPs : [hear hear]
14 WH : well evidently Madam Speaker we've got as much chance of getting a
15 straight answer out of the Prime Minister (.) as of meeting a (.) as of meeting
16 a Minister for the cabinet office in economy class (.) or of er (.) or of meeting
MPs : [laughter]
17 the Welsh Secretary at a meeting of the electoral reform society (.) the actual the
MPs : [laughter]
18 truth of what the CBI say (.) is that the last two budgets (.) resulted in an extra
19 tax burden on businesses of over five billion pounds a year since Labour's
20 election (.) and it's not just in the things that he mentioned (.) it's more
21 corporation tax more fuel duties more stamp duties (.) loss dividend tax
22 credits (.) will he now acknowledge that his claim three weeks ago that
23 business taxes have come down was complete and utter rubbish (1)
MPs : [hear hear]
24 PM : No Madam Speaker I won't (.) as I've just said to him we have actually cut

25 corporation tax (.) er and as for as for the tax burden the tax burden if we look
 26 at the figures (.) the tax burden will rise over this parliament at or below the
 27 level predicted by the Conservatives in their last budget (.) so what he is
 28 saying is actually wrong (.) but we have managed at the same time (.) to sort
 29 out the public finances (.) to get interest rates at their lowest level for over
 30 thirty years (.) and put inflation back under control (.) all of which his
 MPs : [hear hear]
 31 government failed to do (1)
 MPs : [hear hear]
 32 WH : absolute (.) he told the House business tax had come down and it is an
 33 indisputable fact that it has gone up by billions of pounds (.) contrary to specific
 34 election promises (.) contrary to every statement from this House (.) they've
 35 raised taxes on businesses by stealth and on the whole country by stealth
 36 and before we debate next week's budget (.) isn't it time he started to tell the
 37 truth about the last one (1)
 MPs : [hear hear]
 38 PM : Madam Speaker I'm delighted to say that this government (.) by
 39 introducing the working families tax credit (.) will make one and a half
 40 million families better off (.) some by up to twenty pounds a week (.) child
 41 benefit is coming in (.) a hundred and thirty pounds a year (.) to five and a half
 MPs : [shouting]
 42 million families (.) well they think it doesn't matter that these families are getting
 43 more money (.) National Insurance cut (.) VAT cut (.) corporation tax cut (.)
 MPs : [talking]
 44 long term capital gains tax cut (.) and Madam speaker as for his mention of the
 45 petrol duty fuel escalator (.) it is it is correct that there is an escalator under
 46 this government (.) it is six percent (.) five percent of it was introduced by his
 47 government (.) and let me read (.) and let me read what the former chancellor
 MPs : [laughter]
 48 of the exchequer (.) let me read what the former chancellor of the exchequer
 MPs : [shouting]
 49 (.) if it's not if it's not out of order to quote him (.) to Conservatives any more
 MPs : [laughter]
 50 (.) let me read what he
 51 said when he put in the escalator (.) any critic of the Tory government's tax
 52 plans (.) who claims also to support the international agreement to curb carbon
 53 dioxide emissions (.) will be sailing dangerously near to hypocrisy (4) and the

MPs : [laughter/shouting]
 54 other (.) the other the other part of the business tax is the windfall tax(.) now I
 55 take it from that that he's opposed to that to too (.) so he's (.) well there we are
 MPs : [shouting]
 56 so so he's opposed to the new deal (.) so what those hundreds of thousands of
 57 young and unemployed people know (.) is that if they vote Tory they get put
 58 out of a job (.) Madam Speaker it's this side that is developing not just low
 59 interest rates (.) not just Bank of England in independence (.) forty billion
 60 pounds extra spending (.) forty billion pounds extra spending (.) and the new
 MPs : [shouting]
 61 deal delivering jobs where the Tories delivered despair

6.3.1. Questions, responses and the adversarial style

It is possible to identify a number of characteristics that make the exchanges shown above in Transcripts 12 and 13 adversarial. The first characteristic is the type of questions used, and the direct contradictions that are given as responses. As mentioned in the previous section, some types of question are more constraining than others in terms of how easy it is to respond to them. In Transcripts 12 and 13 the following question forms are used by Hague:

Transcript 12:

- 1) Line 6-8: *Will the Prime Minister confirm that people waiting (...) do not appear in the figures.*
- 2) Line 17-22: *Isn't the truth this that there are half a million people waiting for hospital appointments as a direct result of managing the National Health Service for the sake of appearances instead of for the sake of patients.*
- 3) (In the same turn) *Aren't the government now just spinning the figures and playing with politics instead of serving the patients.*
- 4) Line 39-41: *Shouldn't he stop spending a hundred and fifty million pounds dragooning GPs into new bureaucracies (...) and reduce the real waiting lists in our health service.*

Transcript 13:

- 5) Line 6: *So who is telling the truth him or the CBI?*

- 6) Line 22-23: *Will he now acknowledge that his claim three weeks ago that business taxes have come down was complete and utter rubbish.*
- 7) Line 36-37: *Isn't it time he started to tell the truth about the last one.*

The forms used in the four question from Transcript 12 are:

- (1) Interrogative request (with *will*) and an embedded clause which is a completed proposition.
- (2), (3) and (4): Declarative with a negative interrogative frame.
- (5) (A Wh-question prefaced with 'so'.)
- (6) Interrogative request (with *will*) and an embedded clause which is a completed proposition.
- (7) Declarative with a negative interrogative frame.

Six of the seven questions Hague asks in Transcripts 12 and 13 require a yes/no response and are therefore conducive. One of the questions (question 5) is a Wh-type question, but it requires a one-word response (either 'him' or 'the CBI'), and is therefore also highly restricted in terms of the response required. In question 5 (above) 'so' is also used. This is identified by Wilson (1990) as a discourse marker that makes a proposition hard to deny as it instructs the person responding to the question to interpret the proposition as a logical consequence (see section 6.2.1.). Additionally contracted negatives in the initial position of a yes/no question (in questions 2, 3, 4 and 7 above) are 'used to suggest that the proposition under question is one which is taken to be true (taken for granted)' (Wilson 1990: 141). Wilson suggests that these discourse items can account for the 'leading', nature of questions (1990: 141). Evidence for this is also present in the two transcripts above as four out of six questions contained negative contractions as part of a negative interrogative frame with declaratives, a structure that Harris (1984) also found to be highly conducive. Another particle evident in questions 1 and 6 above is the modal verb '*will*'. This was a feature used frequently in Wilson's (1990: 146) corpus of questions from PMQT sessions. It makes a refusal difficult for the respondent because *will* is more polite than other modals such as 'can'.

In this way both the linguistic items and constructions used within questions and the form of the questions themselves contribute to an adversarial style in Prime

Minister's Question Times. As Harris points out 'questions are clearly attempts to get the hearer to *say something*' (1984: 6). This is particularly true of contexts in which participants are compelled to respond to questions according to constraints that do not apply in ordinary conversations, such as law courts or parliamentary question time sessions. However, whilst the function of courtroom questions can largely be explained by the asymmetrical power relations between participants, the functions of questions in parliamentary question time sessions are arguably more complex in both their form and function. Questions are often long, structurally complex and contain many assertions and presuppositions, and their function is typically not only to find out information but also to criticise, demean or insult political opponents and their political parties.

It is difficult to respond to the predominantly yes/no parliamentary questions that have a number of presuppositions and assertions. MPs cannot ignore very negative assertions made about them or their party, but they must also reply to the final question. Figure 6 below summarises how the Prime Minister responds to one of Hague's turns.

Figure 6: The assertions, question and responses to one of Hague's turns (Transcript 12 lines 14-30)

Hague: Assertion 1 – there is no change to the way figures are calculated.

Assertion 2 – waiting lists are higher under this government.

Assertion 3 – people are waiting to be on waiting lists.

Assertion 4 – half a million people are waiting because of poor management.

Question – Aren't the government spinning the figures instead of serving the patients.

Blair: *No Madam Speaker*. Responds to the final question.

Responds to assertion 1 – agrees with Hague that there is no change.

Responds to assertion 2 – waiting lists are lower.

Responds to assertion 4 – quotes latest out-patient figures to show they are low.

The Prime Minister responds to the yes/no question first, but gives a 'no' response to a question that is conducive to answering 'yes'. He continues the turn by responding to three of Hague's assertions, separating the points from each other by explicitly calling the first two 'first' and 'second'. It is noticeable that the PM does not respond to Hague's third assertion (that people are waiting to get onto the waiting lists), and Hague picks up on this and targets the subject a second time in his next turn (Transcript 12, line 35).

Blair's initial 'no' response is a very direct, unmitigated response to the question which conforms to none of the politeness or face-saving conventions that would be appropriate in less adversarial contexts. This strategy has the effect of strongly negating the proposition in Hague's question. Blair uses this strategy in three of the six questions in the two transcripts and in each case there is no hesitation or mitigation of the negative response. In one case (Transcript 13, line 24) the PM responds '*No Madam Speaker, I won't*' when Hague asks him to acknowledge that a previous statement was '*complete and utter rubbish*'. It is noticeable that the Prime Minister always uses the phrase 'Madam Speaker' immediately after he says 'no'. Whilst convention dictates that he address his reply to the Speaker rather than to Hague, there is no rule that states he must use the address term immediately he begins the turn. The use of the formal address term after the unmitigated 'no' could have a number of functions: either to gesture towards politeness after the rude 'no'; or to emphasise that fact that the PM is not directly addressing Hague; or possibly to gain time without using any hesitation phenomena that could be interpreted as being indecisive or uncertain.

Apart from the direct negative responses, the Prime Minister also responds to William Hague by ignoring his question and refuting one of Hague's assertions as the initial part of his response:

Response 1: *Madam Speaker the waiting lists are published and calculated in precisely the same way under this government as under the previous government.* (Transcript 12, line 9)

Response 4: *Madam Speaker actually the CBI has welcomed our reform of tax.* (Transcript 13, line 7)

Response 6: *Madam Speaker I'm delighted to say that this government (...) by introducing the working families tax credit will make one and a half million families better off.* (Transcript 13, lines 38-40)

In the case of response 6 (above) the PM brings up an entirely new topic (the working families tax credit) as his response, even though Hague's question was about business tax. Here Blair shows how advantageous it is to have the final turn in question time sessions as he has the opportunity to interpret Hague's question about the economy in a way that allows him to highlight new government initiatives.

In this way both Hague and Blair use what can be described as adversarial linguistic features in their questions and responses respectively. Hague uses polar interrogatives and other conducive forms which have limited options for a response. This puts maximum interactional pressure on Blair to grant assent to the presuppositions and assertions with which Hague prefaces his question, whilst negotiating the yes/no response to the question itself and attempting to introduce the topics that show the government in a favourable light. Blair's responses are frequently direct unmitigated responses (expressed indirectly through the Speaker) that do not respect the face needs of his opponent while directly refuting Hague's claims.

6.3.2. The use of contrasts and the adversarial style

The second linguistic feature that characterises an adversarial style is the predominance of the use of contrasts both between and within Blair's and Hague's speeches. As Adams (1999) observes of interaction in television panel discussions, the two speakers construct their opposition to one another by alternating between 'pro' and 'con' attitudes towards a particular topic. This is particularly evident in both Transcript 12 where the 'up' and 'down' of waiting list numbers is the central claim of each speaker respectively, and in Transcript 13 where the 'up' and 'down' of tax rates is the main claim. The antonyms that orientate the listener towards these contrasts often contain particular word stress. In Transcript 12 Hague stresses the fact that the waiting list are high on the words

'more' (line 7), 'higher'(line 15), 'double' (line 17), 'up' (line 38), 'longer' (line 38). The Prime Minister stresses that they are low on the words 'down' (line 13) and 'more' (line 30). A similar stress pattern can be seen in Transcript 13 where Hague stresses 'up' twice (lines 5 and 33) and the Prime Minister stresses 'lowest' (line 13), 'cut' (line 24), 'lowest' (line 29) and 'cut' (lines 43 and 44).

Apart from taking opposing stances towards particular arguments, both speakers make contrasts in their speeches between 'good actions' and 'bad actions' which are attributable to their opponents. This is one of the standard 'models of argument' that Cockcroft and Cockcroft (1992: 66) identify as the 'oppositional model' which functions on the basis of contrasts and has many subvarieties such as 'contraries' (e.g. good/bad); contradictions (e.g. good/not good); privatives (e.g. blind/sighted) and relatives (e.g. parent/child). Often these contrasts are described in exaggerated or aggravated terms (see 6.3.4. below). For example in Transcript 12 (lines 19-22) Hague contrasts the government's management of the NHS as being '*for the sake of appearances instead of for the sake of patients*' and '*playing with politics instead of serving the patients*'. As well as the choice of lexis, the contrast itself between the two types of actions or attitudes strengthens the criticism as it implies that there is some easily identifiable alternative action that the opponent is not taking. There are a number of examples in Transcripts 12 and 13 of these types of contrasts including contrasts between what the government promised to do and what they are actually doing (Transcript 13 lines 32-37), and many contrasts between what '*this government*' is doing and what the '*Tory*' or '*previous*' government did. Typically a speaking turn ends with a contrast of this kind, for example the Prime Minister's final turn in Transcript 12 ends '*that is why this country will trust us and not him with the health service*' (lines 49-50); and his final turn in Transcript 13 ends '*it is this side that is developing (...) the new deal delivering jobs where the Tories delivered despair*' (lines 58-61). Similarly, in Transcript 13 Hague's third turn ends '*before we debate next week's budget isn't it time he started to tell the truth about the last one*' (lines 36-7).

One of the ways in which these contrasts are strengthened is by the use of pronouns to establish group identities and allegiances in order to emphasise the

differences between 'us' and 'them'. For example in Transcript 13, line 42, the Prime Minister says '*they think it doesn't matter that these families are getting more money*' contrasting what 'they' (the opposition) think with what 'we' (the government) think. The Prime Minister often uses the pronoun 'we' to refer to the government whereas Hague rarely refers to his party in this way. This probably reflects the fact that Hague is in a less powerful position than the Prime Minister whereas every time the Prime Minister refers to 'we the government' he is reinforcing his position as the most powerful person in the debating chamber.

6.3.3. The description of opponents and the adversarial style

The third feature that characterises these exchanges as adversarial is the way in which the speakers describe their opponents. These descriptions fall into two categories. The first is that when something is being described that is detrimental to the opposition in an 'aggravated', exaggerated or hyperbolic way. For example in Transcript 12 Hague says that Blair should stop '*dragooning GPs into new bureaucracies*' (lines 39-40), and Blair refers to '*the mess*' (line 47) left behind by the Conservative government as '*reckless and irresponsible*' (line 49). In Transcript 13 Hague refers to Blair's claim as '*complete and utter rubbish*' (line 23) and Blair says that '*the Tories delivered despair*' (line 61).

The second way in which these descriptions are adversarial is that opponents are often referred to in a way that attributes them with morally accountable behaviour, and this is often linked to the truth or veracity of their claims. For example in Transcript 12, Hague describes '*the real scandal*' (line 16) of waiting lists implying both a veracity claim with the word 'real' and a moral judgement with the word 'scandal'. He also describes Blair as '*spinning the figures*' (line 21) which implies some form of deceit about the way the figures are presented. Typically speakers claim 'the truth' of their positions and in doing so imply the falsity of their opponent's positions, for example in Transcript 12 on line 17 Hague claims '*isn't the truth this...*'. In Transcript 13 there are also examples of opponents being attributed with morally accountable actions. For example, Hague says Blair '*failed to answer*' a question (line 2) and says that the government have raised taxes '*by stealth*' (line 35), implying a form of deceit. There are also a

number of veracity claims in the second transcript, Hague refers to '*the actual truth of what the CBI say*' (line 17-18), and asks '*who is telling the truth him or the CBI?*' (line 6). One of the rules of the House of Commons is that MPs are not allowed to say that other MPs are lying, but this is one of the most common implications made about opponents. For example in Transcript 13 Hague says that the Prime Minister '*told the House business tax had come down and it is an indisputable fact that it has gone up by billions of pounds*' (line 32-3), and he says that it is time that Blair '*started to tell the truth*'. So although Hague does not directly accuse Blair of lying it is clear that this is the intended implication.

The analysis of PMQT transcripts in this section and the overview of research in section 6.2. have lead to the identification of a set of linguistic features that constitute an adversarial style. Having identified these features it is now possible to establish whether the use of these features varies in examples of exchanges taken from different Question Time sessions

6.4. Variation in the Use of Adversarial Features in Question Times

The data for this section is taken from video recordings of Prime Minister's and Departmental Question Time sessions from the full 60-hour data corpus.¹ The use of the adversarial features identified above is common in all the question time sessions, not just exchanges between Tony Blair and William Hague. Typically the most adversarial exchanges are between Conservative Party MPs and government Ministers. Conducive questions are common, although they are not always responded to in the direct, unmitigated way in which Blair responds to Hague in Transcripts 12 and 13. Transcript 14 below shows an exchange from a Trade and Industry Questions time session where Margaret Beckett does not respond to conducive questions with direct contradictions.

Transcript 14: Exchange between John Redwood (Conservative) and Margaret Beckett (Lab) Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Trade and Industry Questions: 02/04/98, Video extract 8)

- 1 **JR** : Madam Speaker (.) has the president now read the budget documentation
2 which show that the corporation tax changes (.) will cost British business
3 four thousand six hundred million pounds more (.) not less (.) not a cut an
4 increase (.) over the lifetime of this parliament (.) has she seen that the
5 National Insurance changes (.) mean a big increase in the cost of employing
6 anyone other than those on low pay (.) does she not realise that this is
7 taxation by stealth and taxation of jobs (.) does she not see that this is taking
8 money away from companies that desperately need that money for R and D (.)
9 for investment for more jobs (.) at a time of unprecedented pressure on
10 manufacturing
11 **MB** : well with regard to companies needing money for investment and for R and D
12 (.) I take the Hon er Right Honourable Gentleman's point and that is of course
13 why this government is taking steps to give them incentives (.) both to support
14 investment (.) and er also to support expenditure on research and development (.)
15 which is more than the last government did (.) er he also raised the issue of er
16 have I looked at the red book and the (.) figures for the changes in the
17 corporation tax over the lifetime of this parliament (.) er he must I am sure be
18 well aware that in the short term (.) yes there is an impact of the changes of
19 the corporation tax (.) but over the long term it actually results in a substantial
20 reduction (.) er in payments of corporation tax of the order from memory of
21 two billion pounds a year (.) that is why the overall impact of the budget has
22 been so much welcomed by business

In this exchange, Redwood's turn consists of three questions. The first asks '*has the president now read the budget documentation...*' (lines 1-2) which requires a yes or no response. It also makes a personal attack on the Minister because the use of 'now' implies that she has not already read it and she should have done so. The second question asks '*does she not realise that this is taxation by stealth..*' (line 6-7) which attacks Beckett on two levels, firstly for being naïve for not having realised something, and secondly by describing the government's actions in morally attributable and aggravated terms (taxation by stealth). The third question

functions in a similar way '*does she not see that this is taking money away from companies*' (lines 7-9), which implies that Beckett does not realise something and at the same time is adversarial in that it is a conducive question in the form of a declarative with a negative frame.

In response to these conducive questions Beckett does not directly contradict the claims, nor does she evade the questions. She ignores the personal nature of the attack and actually agrees with Redwood '*I take the Right Honourable Gentleman's point*' (line 12), but then goes on to say that the government are giving research and development incentives and contrasts this with the '*last government*' (line 15), so using the 'this government/last government' contrast identified as an adversarial feature in the previous section. Beckett then uses a short term/long term explanation in answer to his first question, and emphasises the success of the budget. Although Beckett's speech is adversarial it is less so than the both Redwood's question and the Prime Minister's responses to William Hague in Transcripts 12 and 13. Beckett's reply is less adversarial because it does not directly contradict the questions, nor does it personally attack Redwood in the way that he (indirectly) attacks her.

In the same way as the main opposition party, the Conservatives, are responsible for the most adversarial exchanges, it could be expected that exchanges between Labour MPs and government Ministers would have the fewest adversarial features because these MPs support the government. Some questions to Ministers are asked in order to support the government and to provide the Minister with a platform for highlighting successful or new government policies. One such question is shown in Transcript 15 below:

Transcript 15: Question from Caroline Flint (Backbench Labour) to the Prime Minister (03/04/00, Video extract 9)

- 1 CF : thank you Madam speaker um (.) is my Right Honourable Friend aware that
2 as we are in this chamber today there is a court being carried out er (.) in con f
3 for the Conisborough ward in my constituency (.) where there's been a full
4 postal ballot (.) as part of our pilot for modernising the way people vote in this

5 country (.) I'm pleased to tell my Right Honourable Friend we're looking at a
 6 forty-five percent turnout (.) and will he extend his congratulations to (.) I
 7 know the person who I know will be re-elected councillor Gerald McClister
 8 (1)
 9MPs : [Laughter]
 10PM : (laughs) well I hope she's right in her predictions er Madam Speaker er but
 11 the point that she makes is a very serious point (.) it is important that we (.)
 12 raise the numbers of people participating in local democracy (.) I think the
 13 early (.) the early results indicate that this is an experiment well worth pursuing
 14 (.) we'll obviously have to evaluate the results carefully (.) but if we are going
 15 to get turnouts (.) ten fifteen percent higher as a result of the new system (.) then
 16 it'll be one reform that'll hugely strengthen the whole of our democracy

This transcript shows Caroline Flint asking a question based upon the new pilot scheme for voting. However, although she is technically asking the Prime Minister a question, the function of her turn is not to find something out but rather to announce something and give the Prime Minister the opportunity to talk about a successful government innovation. The Prime Minister then praises the scheme whilst validating Flint's question '*the point that she makes is a very serious point*' (line 11). Although the exchange does not appear to be overtly adversarial, this somewhat exaggerated praise of one's own party is adversarial in the context of the whole question time session because it strengthens one of the political parties in relation to the others. The Prime Minister's response strengthens his party's position in the same way. His turn is consensual in that it does not exhibit any of the adversarial features identified (apart from the use of the pronoun 'we' (line 14)), and in that it explicitly agrees with the questioner.

However, some questions from Labour MPs to government Ministers do contain either genuine requests for information, or criticisms of government policies. Transcript 16 below shows a question from another Labour backbencher to the Secretary of State for Industry, Margaret Beckett.

Transcript 16: Exchange between Alan Williams (Labour) and Margaret Beckett
(Lab) Secretary of State for Trade and Industry: (02/04/98)

- 1 AW : er will my Honourable Friend initiate discussions not only in her own
2 Department and with the Chancellor (.) but in cabinet over the strength of
3 Sterling (.) er it's become Britain's number one problem (.) er in terms of the
4 economy (.) but er um does she recall that between seventy nine eighty one
5 when the pound became a petrol currency (.) and as a result of its
6 overvaluation we lost two million jobs in manufacturing industry (.) in eighty
7 nine ninety two (.) in the ERM at two ninety-five Deutschmarks to the pound
8 it was not competitive and it produced a second recession (.) again at three
9 deutschmarks to the pound we are not competitive (.) it's a vital problem we
10 cannot get economic stability at this level for sterling (1)
11 MB well I understand the concern my honourable friend expresses and he is
12 entirely right to draw attention to the record of the party opposite (.) all I
13 would say to him however (.) is that er that manufacturing output has actually
14 risen on the latest figures (.) er despite the difficulties he identifies

Here Alan Williams starts by asking Beckett to raise discussions over the strength of Sterling in the cabinet (lines 1-3). The fact that he is asking her to do this, and that he says that this is '*Britain's number one problem*' means that he is criticising the government for not having done something about it sooner. However, he uses the example of periods when the Conservatives were in government to show that jobs were lost because of the high levels of Sterling (line 4-8). He then switches from talking about past occasions to discussing the present situation '*again at three deutschmarks to the pound we are not competitive it is a vital problem we cannot get economic stability at this level for Sterling*' (lines 9-10). In identifying this vital problem he is criticising the government. Beckett responds briefly by saying that she understands his concern, and then she makes his reference to the two time periods at which Sterling was high explicitly adversarial by saying '*he is entirely right to draw attention to the record of the party opposite*' (line 12). In fact Williams had at no point mentioned the Conservative government, so Beckett makes his contribution more adversarial by underlining and re-framing this part of his question. Beckett goes on to contradict what his claims by saying that the latest figures show that manufacturing output has risen. Beckett partially agrees

with Williams and therefore supports a fellow MP, but at the same time re-directs the question in order to answer his criticism and attack the opposition.

In some cases when Labour MPs ask government Ministers questions the function of the question is purely to criticise the opposition, so the question is extremely adversarial but not directed at the Minister who is answering the question. This is evident in Transcript 17 below:

Transcript 17: Exchange between Jacqui Smith (Lab) and Margaret Beckett (Lab)
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (02/04/98)

- 1 JS : um would my Right Honourable Friend agree with me that (.) whilst
2 recognising the current challenges faced by (.) British business by the high
3 value of the pound (.) the approach to this situation shows the clear
4 differences between this government and an opportunistic and inconsistent
5 opposition (.) is it not the case that whilst the opposition is proposing short-
6 term panic measures (.) with little economic rationale or consistency (.) it's
7 this government that through the last budget has put into place
8 lower corporate tax rates (.) reforms to the tax system (.) and cuts in
9 regulatory burdens (.) all measures that will improve the
10 long-term competitiveness and success of British business (1)
11 MB : my Honourable Friend is entirely right (.) and that is of course a major theme
12 of the Chancellor's approach (.) as well as of the policies that he has put in
13 place (.) in contrast to the party opposite (.) we do not merely talk about the
14 National interest in the long term (.) we actually act to try and secure it

This question exhibits many of the features of the adversarial style identified in the previous section, but is framed within a request for the agreement of the Minister. The opposition is described using aggravated descriptions as being '*opportunistic and inconsistent*' (line 4), and having '*short-term panic measures with little economic rationale and consistency*' (line 5-6). Contrasts are made between the success of the government and the failure of the opposition. The question used is conducive, but in this case the Minister agrees with the proposition '*my Honourable Friend is entirely Right*', and reinforces the attack on

the opposition by contrasting the government who '*act and try and secure*' the National interest with the opposition who '*merely talk about*' it (line 13-14).

In a similar way the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy, uses his question to the Prime Minister to attack the leader of the opposition, William Hague. This is shown in Transcript 18 below:

Transcript 18: Exchange between Charles Kennedy (LibDem) and the Prime Minister (03/04/00, Video extract 10)

- 1 CK : Madam Speaker (.) Madam Speaker in (.) Madam Speaker in (.) Madam
2 Speaker in condemning utterly (.) the evil thuggery that we all witnessed in
3 central London two days ago (.) could I turn the Prime Minister's attention to
4 another form of evil in our society (.) the evil of racism (.) would he (.) would he
MPs [hear hear]
5 agree with me that the appalling attack (.) on the black care worker in
6 Birmingham (.) two days ago who was racially abused and then set fire to (.)
7 should act as a (.) important pointer to every politician in this House (.) that there
MPs : [hear hear]
8 is (.) that we should not (.) that we should not conduct ourselves in a way
9 which plays or panders to the worst fears of racial prejudice in this country (2)
MPs : [hear hear]
10PM : Madam Speaker I agree with every word the Honourable Gentleman has said (1)
11CK : would (.) would the Prime Minister further acknowledge and agree (.) that
12 when one is talking (.) particularly with elections approaching (.) about issues
13 like asylum and immigration (.) that to use saloon bar language (.) is nothing
14 more (.) nothing more than gutter politics (*points at William Hague*) (3)
MPs : [hear hear]
15PM : Madam Speaker the Right Honourable Gentleman may laugh (.) but I think I
16 think it is extraordinary that he has not come to the dispatch box (.) and put
17 the positions he's been putting in the country (.) yeah and the reason he
MPs : [hear hear]
18 doesn't do so is because he knows perfectly well his arguments wouldn't stand
19 up in a proper debate (.) Madam Speaker let me just make one point (.) asylum
MPs : [hear hear]
20 and the growth in asylum seekers is an issue (.) and we're trying to deal with

21 that issue (.) but one thing is a cruel deception (.) to go round the country (.)
 22 telling people (.) that all the problems of the health service and schools and old
 23 age pensioners (.) could be solved if only we locked up a few asylum seekers
 24 (.) let me just give the house the facts (.) the total cost of asylum is less than
 MPs :[talking]
 25 one fifth of one percent of government spending (.) it is a problem (.) we're
 26 dealing with it but we should not any of us exploit it (.) particularly not
 27 someone whose desperation is rather bigger than his judgement

Here Kennedy asks the Prime Minister to condemn the '*evil of racism*' (line 4) and asks that the racist murder should be '*a pointer to every politician in this house*' not to behave in a way that '*panders to the worst fears of racial prejudice in this country*' (line 9). In fact, given the contextual information that William Hague had been making statements about asylum seekers to the media, one can infer that Kennedy is not addressing 'every politician' but one in particular – William Hague. After the Prime Minister agrees with the statement Kennedy tries to draw the Prime Minister into criticising the leader of the Opposition. He does this by pointing to William Hague at the end of his turn. Blair then criticises Hague for his comments on asylum seekers. This exchange shows two politically opposed politicians uniting to criticise a third, and whilst the Prime Minister uses non-adversarial language to agree with Kennedy, he uses adversarial language to criticise Hague. This is particularly evident at the end of the Prime Minister's turn when he describes Hague as '*someone whose desperation is rather bigger than his judgement*' (line 27).

There are some questions that do not exhibit any features of an adversarial style. For example, Transcript 19 (below) shows the Liberal Democrat Colin Breed asking Margaret Beckett about companies that import goods:

Transcript 19: Exchange between Colin Breed (Lib Dem) and Margaret Beckett (Lab) Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (02/04/98, Video extract 11)
 CB = Colin Breed MB = Margaret Beckett

1 CB : thank you er Madam Speaker (.) er could I ask the Minister (.) er whilst great

2 concentration has been placed upon the (.) companies that export and the
 3 problems with the current value of the pound (.) er has the government
 4 considered the problems of those that are competing with imports (.) er which
 5 are now obviously much lower and the competitiveness that they are er
 6 experiencing (.) and finding themselves a a at an extreme disadvantage (1)
 7 MB :well of course we take account of all aspects er of the impact of the level of
 8 sterling (.) and the Honourable Gentleman will know (.) er that it is our view
 9 that the exchange rate er that we should strive to make the exchange rate
 10 stable but also competitive (.) er however he will also be well aware er that er
 11 it is not easy in the short term for governments to influence these things (.) it
 12 is right however for the measures to be taken to create long-term stability this
 13 is what we are doing

In this transcript Colin Breed asks a yes/no question of the Minister '*has the government considered...*' (line 4), prefaced by the polite form '*could I ask..*' (line 1). He uses no contrasts between this government and the last government (presumably because he is from a party that is neither of these), and does not use aggravated descriptions or personally attack Margaret Beckett. The Minister replies using few adversarial features. Although she does establish contrasts by using the pronoun '*we*' and referring to '*our view*' she does not attack the previous government or describe her opponents in an aggravated way. Perhaps the least adversarial part of the reply is that she admits '*it is not easy in the short term for governments to influence these things*', something that she would probably not admit to a more adversarial opponent. It appears that Breed's consensual question does somewhat set the tone for the response.

Apart from the lack of adversarial features in his question, the MP hesitates and the question is not very coherently constructed so he does not present much of a threat to the Minister, which may account for her relatively non-adversarial response. Features such as hesitations cannot be described as 'consensual' linguistic features, but they nevertheless detract from the pressure that is brought to bear on the respondent. Similarly, discourse items such as '*well*' are used before responses given in Transcript 14, line 11, p.177; Transcript 15, line 10, p.178; Transcript 16, line 11, p.180; and Transcript 19, line 7 above. Discourse items like *well* are qualifiers and have the effect of mitigating the response and

making it less direct. They have also been more explicitly attributed with signalling uncertainty: ‘*well* is used when the speaker senses some sort of insufficiency in his answer’ (Lakoff 1973: 473). ‘Well’ also indicates a dispreferred move in conversation analysis along with pauses and filled pauses such as ‘um’ (Levinson 1983: 334).

This close analysis of transcripts taken from question time sessions shows that there is variation in the use of adversarial linguistic features by different MPs. Some questions and responses contain no adversarial responses whilst others contain all of the adversarial features identified in sections 6.2. and 6.3. Compared with the transcripts in this section the exchanges between Hague and Blair (in Transcripts 12 and 13) contain many more adversarial features, and it is likely that most exchanges will not contain as many adversarial features. Having shown that it is possible to identify the adversarial linguistic features in these transcripts (and that the use of these features between speakers varies) it is now possible to assess whether this variation relates to the gender and parliamentary status of MPs.

6.5. The Use of Adversarial Linguistic Features in Question Times

6.5.1. Introduction

In this section the use of adversarial features identified in section 6.3. and 6.4. by male and female MPs in question times is assessed. The data corpus consisted of five Departmental question time sessions (from Treasury, Health, Home Office, Social Security and Defence departments) and six Prime Minister’s Question Time sessions². The question times occurred between January 1998 and June 2000. The questions³ of 200 MPs were analysed from these sessions, 100 from Departmental Question Times (DQT) and 100 from Prime Minister’s Question times (PMQT). For each question time session each question and response was analysed and adversarial features noted. The parliamentary status of MPs and their political party as well as the gender of MPs is taken into account as it is likely that these factors may affect the frequency and type of questions asked.

6.5.2. The number of questions asked by male and female MPs

The number of questions asked by male and female MPs in PMQT and DQT sessions is a marker of the extent to which both groups of MPs participate in the most adversarial forms of interaction in the House of Commons. Table 9 below shows the amount of questions in this small data corpus asked in PMQT and DQT sessions by male and female MPs according to their parliamentary status and political party. The parliamentary status of MPs was divided into low status MPs who were backbenchers with no other parliamentary responsibilities; mid status MPs who had some particular responsibilities (for example a select committee member, or a parliamentary secretary to a Minister); and high status MPs who were party leaders, Ministers, Shadow Ministers or opposition spokespersons.

Table 9: The number of questions asked by male and female MPs showing their parliamentary status and political party.

Male/female	Male					Female				
Party	Status					Status				
	Low	Mid	High	total	%	Low	Mid	High	total	%
Labour	23	33	2	58	29	13	16	1	30	15
Conservative	28	27	22	77	39	1	4	1	6	3
LibDem	0	0	20	20	10	0	0	0	0	0
other	4	1	4	9	4	0	0	0	0	0
Total	55	61	48	164		14	20	2	36	
% of all Qs	28	30	24		82	7	10	1		18

Table 9 shows that 82 % (164) of questions in the eleven DQT and PMQT sessions were asked by male MPs and 18 % (36) of questions were asked by women MPs. In this sample the number of questions asked is exactly in proportion to the representation of men and women MPs in parliament (82% and 18% respectively)⁴.

Apart from the differing male and female populations, the data shown in Table 9 is further complicated by the fact that the political parties and status groups within each party vary greatly in size. Table 9 (above) shows that 44% of questions were asked by male and female Labour MPs, 41% by Conservative MPs, 10% by Liberal Democrat MPs and 4% by MPs from other parties. However, the numbers of MPs within each party varies. Table 10 below shows the numbers of MPs in each political party and the percentage of male and female MPs in each party.

Although the most questions (44%) were asked by Labour MPs and 42% of questions were asked by Conservative MPs, if the figures are expressed as a proportion of the number of MPs in each party only 21% of the total number of Labour MPs asked questions whilst 48% of the total number of Conservative MPs asked questions⁵.

Table 10 : Numbers of male and female MPs in each political party.

Party	MPs		Male		Female	
	No.	% of all MPs	No.	% of party	No.	% of party
Labour	417	63	316	76	101	24
Conservative	162	25	154	92	13	8
LibDems	46	7	42	92	4	8
other	34	5	28	94	2	6
Total	659		539		120	

These percentages show that the Conservative party asked the most questions in relation to the size of their party, a fact which is linked to the party's role as the main opposition to the government.

Tables 9 and 10 show that in relation to the size of the political parties, Labour women MPs asked proportionally more questions compared with male Labour MPs. Conservative women MPs asked proportionally fewer questions than male

Conservative MPs, and no women Liberal Democrat MPs asked a question, even though they represent 8% of the party⁶.

Table 9 also shows the numbers of questions asked according to the status of male and female MPs in each party⁷. Within the Labour party, mid status MPs asked most questions. Low status male and female MPs asked 40% of the questions, mid status MPs 56% of the questions and high status MPs only 4% of the questions. In comparison, within the Conservative party 28% of question were asked by high status MPs, 37% were asked by mid status MPs and 35% by low status MPs. In the Liberal Democrat party 100% of questions were asked by high status male MPs. The low percentage of questions asked by high status Labour MPs compared to the percentage of high status Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs reflects the function of question time primarily as an opportunity for opposition MPs to question Ministers and scrutinise government policies. High status MPs within the opposition parties have the necessary experience and information to undertake this scrutiny most effectively. High status MPs in the Labour party are familiar with government policy and questions to their fellow Ministers would reflect negatively on the government as they might suggest a lack of communication between government Ministers.

Female Labour low status MPs accounted for 36% of all the Labour low status questions asked, 33% of all the Labour mid status questions asked and one question out of three of the high status questions asked. In each of these status categories Labour women MPs therefore asked approximately one in three of the questions. This is a higher proportion of questions than the one to four ratio of women to men in the Labour party as a whole. Within the conservative party most of the low status questioners were men (97%), but mid status female MPs accounted for 13% of all the mid status questions which is higher than the 8% representation of women in the Conservative party as a whole. Only 4% of the high status Conservative questions were asked by women.

As in the analysis of the participation of MPs in question times in the whole 60-hour corpus (Tables 4 and 5, Chapter Five, p.132), the amount of questions asked by male and female MPs in this smaller data corpus differed between PMQT and

DQT sessions. Tables 11 and 12 below show the numbers of questions asked by male and female MPs from different parties and of different status groups in PMQTs and DQTs respectively.

Table 11: Number of questions asked by male and female MPs in Prime Minister's Question Time Sessions showing their parliamentary status and political party

Male/female	Male				Female			
Party	Status				Status			
	Low	Mid	High	Total	Low	Mid	High	Total
Labour	14	18	2	34	6	6	0	12
Conservative	15	7	15	37	0	1	1	2
LibDem	0	0	11	11	0	0	0	0
other	3	1	0	4	0	0	0	0
Total	32	26	28	86	6	7	1	14

Table 11 shows that in Prime Minister's question times 86% of questions were asked by male MPs and 14% by female MPs. This means that only one in seven questions in PMQT were asked by women which is not representative of the one fifth of women MPs in the House of Commons. However, as Table 12 (below) shows, 22 % of questions in DQT sessions were asked by female MPs which means that approximately one in five (4.5) questions asked in DQTs were asked by women⁸.

The fact that women asked fewer questions than men in Prime Minister's question Times can be partly accounted for by the form of the session which guarantees that the Conservative Leader, William Hague asks at least one question and usually asks two questions each session. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party (Paddy Ashdown before October 1999 and Charles Kennedy after this period) also asks one question every PMQT session. As both leaders are men this is one explanation for the higher number of men asking questions in PMQT sessions, and the difference between the figures for PMQT and DQT sessions.

This also underlines the fact that MPs in the highest positions have preferential treatment in terms of securing speaking turns, and as there are no women party leaders they do not have access to this interactional privilege.

Table 12: Number of questions asked by male and female MPs in Departmental Question Time Sessions showing their parliamentary status and political party

Male/female	Male				Female			
Party	Status				Status			
	Low	Mid	High	Total	Low	Mid	High	Total
Labour	9	15	0	24	7	10	1	18
Conservative	13	20	7	40	1	3	0	4
LibDem	0	0	9	9	0	0	0	0
other	1	0	4	5	0	0	0	0
Total	23	35	20	78	8	13	1	22

Apart from this difference (which is also evidenced in the higher numbers of high status Conservative questions in PMQT compared with DQT) the numbers of MPs asking questions in the different status and party groups is similar in each table, and the analysis of the number of questions asked by MPs in each group is similar to the analysis of the data presented in Table 9 above. Given the explanations above, the number of questions asked by male and female MPs in the two types of sessions is therefore likely to be in proportion to the numbers of male and female MPs in the House of Commons as a whole⁹.

The analysis of the data presented in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 shows that Conservative party MPs asked the most questions in relation to the size of their party which reflects their political position as the main opposition party. Overall female and male MPs asked a similar amount of questions in relation to the numbers of female and male MPs in the House of Commons. However, the amount of questions asked by male and female MPs differed according to political party. Women Labour MPs asked a third of the Labour questions (although they make up only 24% of the Labour Party), whereas women Conservative MPs only

asked 7% of the Conservative questions which means they were slightly under-represented. Female and Male Labour MPs were represented in equal proportions in each status group. Only one question was asked by a Conservative female MP in both low and high status groups. Female Liberal Democrat MPs and female MPs from other parties did not ask any questions in this data sample. Having summarised the data presented in the section above showing the number of questions asked by MPs, the amount of adversarial questions asked by MPs in each party and status group is analysed in section 6.5.3.

6.5.3. Adversarial questions in Question Time Sessions

In order to identify whether the questions asked by MPs in the data corpus were adversarial or not, the use of the adversarial features described in section 6.2. and 6.3. above were noted for each question. The question form was also recorded. Seven adversarial features were used, these were: opposing stances between MPs (such as the ‘up’ and ‘down’ or pro and con stances identified in section 6.3.); positive and negative contrasts (typically between the actions of the speaker’s party and the opposing party); the use of personal pronouns to strengthen these contrasts (such as *we*, *they*, *them* and *us*); aggravated descriptions; descriptions which hold the other side morally accountable; personal attacks on MPs; and truth or veracity claims.

The presence or absence of these features allowed a question to be classified as adversarial or non-adversarial. An example of the way in which the data was noted is given below in Figure 7.

Figure 7: The way in which adversarial features were recorded.

MP	question function	Question form	Contrasts			Description			
			p/c	+/-	pp	ag	ma	p	v
Swayne Con. male S.C. Member	criticises government	<i>will the PM take time out of his...day to..</i>				++	+	+	
PM Response	defends policies/ attacks Con.			+	+			+	

As Figure 7 shows, the male Conservative MP uses three different types of adversarial features in his question. One ‘+’ in the grid represents one or two instances of the particular feature, a second ‘+’ was given if there were more than two instances of a feature. If a question contained one or more ‘+s’ in any of the seven different categories it was counted as being adversarial. This method of noting features also meant that it was possible to give each question and response an adversarial ‘score’ out of fourteen (the maximum amount of adversarial ‘points’ that could be awarded). The adversarial scores of different questions are presented in Tables 15 and 16 in section 6.5.4 below.

Figure 7 also shows that the form of the question was noted, as well as a profile of each MP. As identified in 6.2. and 6.3., the form of the question, and especially conducive questions are features that may make up an adversarial style. The form of questions was not used as an initial measure of the adversarial nature of a questioning turn because a conducive form is often used even when the turn is not adversarial. For example, a typical question that is not adversarial may be in the form ‘*Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating.....*’ and then go on to praise government policies. The form of the question alone is therefore not a good measure of whether a question is adversarial or not. So although adversarial questions tend to take a conducive form, conducive forms are not necessarily a marker of an adversarial question in the way that the seven contrastive and descriptive features shown above are. An analysis of the form of the questions in the data corpus is included in section 6.5.5. below

Table 13 (below) shows the numbers of adversarial questions asked by female and male MPs in different political parties and status groups in both PMQT and DQT sessions.

Table 13: The amount of adversarial questions asked by male and female MPs according to their political party and status.

Male/female	Male				Female			
Party	Status				Status			
	Low	Mid	High	Total %	Low	Mid	High	Total %
Labour	9	15	1	25	3	3	1	7
Conservative	18	18	18	54	0	1	1	2
LibDem	0	0	12	12	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total/%	28	33	31	92	3	4	2	9

Out of the 200 questions asked 101 were adversarial (containing one or more of the seven adversarial features described above) and 99 non-adversarial (containing none of the seven adversarial features). The figures in each category in Table 13 are also therefore approximate percentages of the total number of adversarial questions asked, as well as the actual numbers of adversarial questions asked. The figures show that 92 adversarial questions were asked by men and 9 by women. This means that only one adversarial question out of every eleven was asked by a female MP and 10 out of eleven by male MPs which is disproportionate to the one fifth of seats occupied by women and four fifths occupied by men. Most of the adversarial questions (56) were asked by Conservative MPs, 32 by Labour MPs and 12 by Liberal Democrat MPs. Out of the adversarial Conservative questions only 2 were asked by female MPs (although they make up 8% of the party), whereas female Labour MPs asked 7 of the Labour adversarial questions which is just under the one to four ratio of women to men in the Labour party as a whole. However, this still means that out of the 30 questions asked by female Labour MPs (shown in Table 9, section 5.5.2.) only seven (23%) were adversarial whereas out of the 58 questions asked by male Labour MPs 25 (43%) were adversarial. This is

a substantial difference which cannot be accounted for by differences in status groups between male and female Labour MPs. Table 14 below shows the number of non-adversarial questions asked by MPs in both PMQT and DQT sessions.

Table 14: The amount of non-adversarial questions asked by male and female MPs according to their political party and status.

Male/female	Male				Female			
Party	Status				Status			
	Low	Mid	High	Total/ %	Low	Mid	High	Total/ %
Labour	14	18	1	33	10	13	0	23
Conservative	10	9	4	23	1	3	0	4
LibDem	0	0	8	8	0	0	0	0
other	3	1	4	8	0	0	0	0
Total/%	27	28	17	72	11	16	0	27

Table 14 shows that female MPs asked more non-adversarial questions than they did adversarial questions. Female MPs asked 27¹⁰ (just under a third) of all the non-adversarial questions with female Labour low and mid status MPs accounting for 23 (85%) of these questions. Of the 56 non-adversarial questions asked by Labour MPs, 23 were asked by women, a proportion which is much greater than the one quarter of women in the party, and the number of Labour adversarial questions asked by female MPs (7). In the Conservative party 85% of non-adversarial questions were asked by men and 15% by women which is also a greater proportion of female questions than the 8% representation of women in the Conservative party, although the total number of questions asked by female Conservative MPs was small (only four questions).

Conservative male MPs only asked 23 of the non-adversarial questions (the same amount as female Labour MPs), and male Labour MPs asked 33 of the non-adversarial questions whereas as noted above, 54 of the adversarial questions were asked by male Conservative MPs. Liberal Democrat MPs asked fewer non-adversarial questions than adversarial questions (eight non-adversarial and twelve

adversarial). Conversely the 'other', smaller parties in the House of Commons asked more non-adversarial questions than adversarial questions (eight non-adversarial and one adversarial). These differences probably reflect the relationship of political parties to the government in that Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties directly oppose the government and each other, and this is evidenced in the high numbers of adversarial questions asked by MPs from these parties. The smaller 'other' parties are too small to form any real opposition to the government and have political aims other than opposing the government such as representing the interests of different British national groups. This may be the reason that the 'other' parties do not tend to ask adversarial questions and instead ask for action to be taken in the interests of the groups they represent.

The amount of adversarial and non-adversarial questions asked by MPs differed in PMQT and DQT sessions. Figure 8 (below) shows the numbers of adversarial and non-adversarial questions asked by male and female MPs in the different sessions.

Figure 8: The number of adversarial and non-adversarial questions asked by male and female MPs in PMQT and DQT sessions.

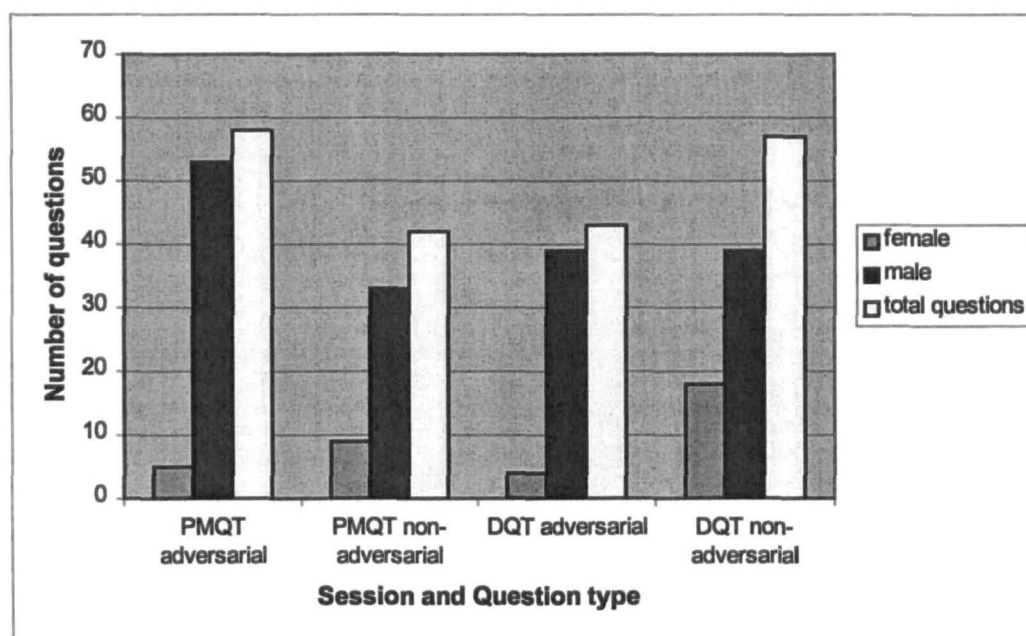


Figure 8 shows that out of the 100 questions asked in PMQT and DQT sessions, PMQT sessions contained more adversarial questions (58) and fewer non-adversarial questions (42), whilst the DQT sessions contained more non-adversarial questions (57) and fewer adversarial questions (43). This shows that out of the two types of session and as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, PMQT sessions are more adversarial than DQT sessions. In PMQT sessions male MPs asked more adversarial questions (53) and fewer non-adversarial questions (33), whereas in DQT sessions male MPs asked the same amount of adversarial and non-adversarial questions (39). Out of the questions asked by female MPs in PMQT sessions 36% were adversarial and 64% non-adversarial (five adversarial and nine non-adversarial), and out of the questions female MPs asked in DQT sessions only 18% were adversarial and 82% non-adversarial (four adversarial and 18 non-adversarial questions). As male MPs asked an equal amount of adversarial and non-adversarial questions in DQT sessions it is the non-adversarial questions asked by female MPs that account for the fact that the majority of questions in DQTs were non-adversarial.

6.5.4. The amount of adversarial features in MPs' adversarial questions.

In this section the number of adversarial features in each adversarial question in the data corpus is analysed. As explained in section 6.5.3. above, each question was given an adversarial score out of a possible maximum of 14 'points' according to the frequency of different adversarial features. Table 15 (below) shows the number of questions asked by male MPs according to the number of adversarial features in the question.

Table 15 below shows that out of the adversarial questions asked by male MPs, most of the questions contained one or two adversarial points. Conservative male MPs asked the most adversarial questions with nine questions containing four to six adversarial points. High status Conservative MPs also asked some questions containing between seven and fourteen adversarial points. These questions were all asked by William Hague in PMQT sessions, so this suggests that this number of adversarial features are not typically used in adversarial questions but are particular to Hague's role as leader of the opposition party.

Table 15: Adversarial features in questions asked by male MPs

Party	Labour			Conservative			LibDem			Other		
Status	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H
Adv. score												
1	3	4		11	5	4			6	1		
2	4	7	1	4	5	2			3			
3	2	3		1	5	4			3			
4		1		2	2	1						
5						3						
6					1							
7						1						
8						2						
9						1						
10												
11						1						
12												
13												
14						1						
Total	9	15	1	18	18	18			12	1		

The data presented above also suggests that higher status MPs ask questions that are more adversarial than those asked by low status MPs. This is particularly evident in the questions asked by male Conservative MPs as the majority of low status MPs asked questions with one adversarial point (11 questions out of 18 had one point), and the most adversarial questions had four points. Whereas the mid status conservative MPs asked an equal amount of questions with one to three adversarial points and the most adversarial question had six points. This is also evident in the questions asked by male Labour MPs with the low status MPs asking questions with one to three points and the mid status MPs asking questions with one to four points (although mid status MPs asked nearly twice as many questions as low status MPs). In the Liberal Democrat party adversarial questions were only asked by high status MPs and most of these were asked by the Leader of the party.

Table 16: Adversarial features in questions asked by female MPs.

Party	Labour			Conservative			LibDem			Other		
Status	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H
Adv. score												
1	2	2	1		1							
2		1										
3												
4	1											
5												
6												
7												
8						1						
9												
10												
11												
12												
13												
14												
Total	3	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 16 (above) shows that out of the nine adversarial questions asked by female MPs, six of them were questions with only one adversarial point. One low status female Labour MP asked a question with four points, and one female Conservative Minister asked a question with eight adversarial points. The number of questions asked is so small that it is difficult to interpret these results further than to say that there is evidence that at least two female MPs ask very adversarial questions.

6.5.5. The form of questions

This section considers the form of questions asked by MPs in PMQT and DQT sessions. In order to analyse the form of questions, one question from each MP's questioning turn in the data corpus was recorded. Although some questioning turns contained more than one interrogative form, the main question was recorded

so that the contributions of MPs were comparable. Where there was more than one question in a turn the main question was typically the last question as it was the one that was most directly focused on the Minister or Prime Minister for a response, and preceding questions in the turn usually built up the presuppositions and assertions that were expressed in the final question.

The questions were categorised according to whether they were conducive or not, and whether the conducive questions occurred with particular forms (such as *will*, *do*, or contracted negatives) identified in section 6.2. and 6.3. Table 17 below shows the forms of questions asked by male and female MPs in both PMQT and DQT sessions.

Table 17: Question forms used by male and female MPs in PMQT and DQT sessions.

Male/female	Labour		Conservative		LibDem		Other	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Question form:								
1) conducive + <i>will</i>	23	19	28	2	12		6	
2) conducive + <i>do</i>	11	6	18	1	1			
3) conducive + <i>isn't it...</i>	2	1	9	1	1			
4) Other conducive	5	2	6		3		3	
5) WH-type	11	2	16	1	3			
6) Other non-conductive	6			1				

Table 17 shows that 160 of the 200 questions (80%) asked took a conducive question form, and only 20% took a non-conductive form. This is similar to John Wilson's (1990) finding that 116 out of 139 questions in PMQT sessions in 1986 were conducive. Of the 36 questions asked by female MPs 94% (32) were conducive whereas 73% (119 questions out of 164) of male questions were conducive and 27% were non-conductive. As only nine questions asked by female MPs were classified as adversarial, these figures suggest that conducive questions are used for both adversarial and non-adversarial questions. Out of the female conducive questions 65% took the modal verb 'will' and 53% of the male

conductive questions took 'will'. This form appears to be the standard or conventional form for asking questions in the House of Commons and is used for both adversarial and non-adversarial questions. It is possible that male MPs use a larger variety of forms than female MPs. This is shown in PMQT sessions where all (100%) of the questions asked by female MPs were conductive and they all took the 'will' form, whereas only 78% of male MPs' questions were conductive and only 41% of these took the 'will' form¹¹.

Given that most of the questions asked by female MPs in PMQTs were not adversarial these figures show that the conductive form with 'will' is used for both adversarial and non-adversarial questions. It is also possible that a conductive question form with 'will' may not constrain the MP's response (as suggested in section 6.2.) precisely because it is the most frequently used or conventional form. In order to put as much pressure upon the responding Minister or Prime Minister it may be that other forms are more successful. This is evident in William Hague's questions where he often uses conductive questions with a contracted negative (for example: *isn't it time he started to tell the truth...?* Transcript two lines 36-37), and also Wh-questions with 'so' (for example: *So who is telling the truth him or the CBI?*). Hague uses these forms more than the conductive question with 'will' form which may suggest that these forms, although less frequently used than 'will' by MPs generally, do facilitate Hague's particularly adversarial turns.

Wh-questions are thought to constrain the respondent less than conductive questions and therefore could be described as less adversarial than conductive questions. However, as the example above shows, Hague uses a wh-question (with *so*) when questioning the Prime Minister in a highly adversarial exchange. Other examples of highly adversarial turns which take the form of Wh-questions are also evident in the data corpus. Examples include:

1. *When will the Prime Minister get a grip, end the Cabinet confusion and stop his Cabinet Ministers fighting like ferrets in a sack? (William Hague, PMQT 14/06/00)*

2. *So when will he put his mouth where he puts other people's money and risk his own capital campaigning to join the Euro? (William Hague, PMQT 14/06/00).*
3. *Why is it then that under this government the savings ratio has gone down by a third? (Conservative male mid-status MP, PMQT 03/03/99).*
4. *How does he dare to claim that he cares? (Conservative male backbencher, PMQT 03/03/99).*

These examples show that although Wh-questions do not constrain the response as much as conducive questions they are used in very confrontational and adversarial exchanges in order to put as much pressure on the Prime Minister as possible. As stated above, the conducive question form with 'will' does constrain the response, however it appears that this form is the standard or conventional way of constructing questions in these sessions. There are many examples in the corpus of this form being used in questions that seek to praise the Prime Minister's government and that do not seek to put pressure upon him (for example '*Will my Right Honourable Friend take this opportunity to join me in congratulating the work force?*'). The fact that conducive forms have been adopted as the standard way of asking questions in Question Times doubtless reflects the adversarial nature of the forum, but the form of the question does not appear to determine whether a question is adversarial or not.

6.5.6. Responses to questions.

The responses that the Prime Minister and Government Ministers give to questions in PMQT and DQT sessions provides more evidence about the ways in which MPs use adversarial features. In Prime Minister's Question Time the Prime Minister gave 62 adversarial responses to 100 questions. As 58 adversarial questions were asked in PMQT sessions the Prime Minister's responses included 4 responses that were not prompted by an adversarial question. These four responses were replying to Labour MPs who had asked questions that praised the government, which the Prime Minister agreed with and then went on to criticise Conservative policies.

The number of adversarial features in the Prime Minister's responses corresponded to the number of adversarial features in the questions. For example in the exchanges between Hague and Blair, the Prime Minister responded to Hague's questions with an equal or greater number of adversarial features than were contained in the question. The direct, unmitigated response of 'No' identified in section 6.3. only occurred in these highly adversarial exchanges between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

The responses in DQT sessions were much more variable than those in PMQT sessions as different Ministers and junior Ministers are responsible for responding to questions within particular DQTs. Table 18 below shows the numbers of adversarial and non-adversarial responses by different male and female Ministers according to their positions as senior or junior Ministers. The table shows that 52% of responses were given by senior male Ministers and 21% by junior male Ministers. Senior Female Ministers also gave 21% of responses and junior female Ministers only 6% of responses. Half of the senior male responses were adversarial and half were non-adversarial whereas a smaller number of the junior male responses were adversarial (29%) and the majority were non-adversarial.

Table 18: Adversarial and non-adversarial responses in DQT sessions

Male/female	Male			Female		
Adversarial/ Non-adv.	adversarial	Non- adversarial	Total/ %	adversarial	Non- adversarial	Total/ %
Status: Senior	26	26	52	6	15	21
Status: Junior	6	15	21	1	5	6
Total	32	41	73	7	20	27

The same number of senior female Ministers' responses were adversarial (29%), and only one out of the six responses given by junior female Ministers was adversarial. These figures show that senior male MPs give the most adversarial responses and junior female MPs the least adversarial responses as a proportion of the total number of responses that each group gave. This suggests that variation in

the number of adversarial responses given does relate to the gender of the Ministers with male MPs giving a higher proportion of adversarial responses and female Ministers giving a higher proportion of non-adversarial responses. Additionally, the fact that there was a difference in the number of adversarial responses given by junior male and female Ministers compared with senior male and female Ministers (as a proportion of the total number of responses each group gave) suggests that the variation of adversarial features is related to the seniority of Ministers.

6.6. Conclusions

The two main questions addressed in this chapter asked whether linguistic features that comprise an adversarial style can be identified in parliamentary Question Time Sessions; and whether the use of these features varies between male and female MPs from different parties and from different status groups. In sections 6.2. and 6.3. it was shown that there are identifiable linguistic features that make question time exchanges adversarial. These features included the use of contrasts within and between MPs' turns, and the way in which MPs describe their opponents.

The close analysis of a number of transcripts taken from different PMQT and DQT sessions in section 6.4. showed that these adversarial linguistic features varied between different speakers. The more systematic analysis of PMQT and DQT sessions undertaken in section 6.5. showed that whilst male and female MPs asked the same amount of questions as a proportion of the representation of these groups in the House of Commons, male MPs asked more adversarial questions than female MPs. This finding was also evident in the responses given by Ministers in DQT sessions as female Ministers gave fewer adversarial responses than male Ministers.

One part of the interaction not taken into account in this investigation is the role the Speaker plays in selecting the MPs to ask questions. However, although any bias on the part of the speaker towards male or female MPs would affect the overall numbers of questions asked, it would not affect the number of adversarial

or non-adversarial questions asked as these were calculated as proportional figures of the total number of male and female MPs¹².

The use of adversarial features also varied according to the party membership and status of MPs within the parliamentary hierarchy. Most of the adversarial questions were asked by Conservative MPs, reflecting their party's position as the main opposition to the government. Labour MPs asked fewer adversarial questions yet they had different choices in terms of the function of their questions as many Labour MPs chose to ask questions that contained no adversarial features and that praised the government. An example of this is shown in Transcript 15 in section 6.4. (p.178). In the analysis of that transcript it was suggested that these types of questions do contribute to the adversarial nature of the exchanges as they overtly support one party in relation to another. As the Labour party has the highest proportion of female MPs (who often ask this type of question)¹³, and the MPs in the Conservative party do not praise their party in this way, this may partially explain why female MPs asked fewer adversarial questions overall. If the Labour party with its current proportion of male and female MPs was in opposition rather than government the numbers of adversarial Labour questions would increase, and possibly also the number of adversarial questions asked by female Labour MPs. However, this factor does not account for the lower number of adversarial responses given by female Ministers compared with their male counterparts. As the results for female MPs' adversarial questions and female Ministers' adversarial responses are both lower than those for male MPs and Ministers this suggests that gender is a factor affecting MPs' use of adversarial features.

The finding that most women MPs who asked questions did not adopt an adversarial linguistic style in question times bears out claims made by language and gender researchers (such as Coates 1991, 1993; Holmes 1992, 1995; Jones 1980 and Tannen 1984, 1986) that women avoid using a 'typically competitive, argumentative and verbally aggressive style' (Holmes 1992: 131). However, these researchers view this behaviour as an integral part of what it is to be a woman (or a man), regardless of other factors such as the context of language use. Adopting this view, women MPs bring their 'natural' consensual speech style into

interaction in the House of Commons (and men bring their 'natural' verbally aggressive one).

Conversely, researchers like Clare Walsh view women's use of discursive styles in public contexts as a way of managing 'socially ascribed expectations that pull in opposite directions' (2000: 274). Similarly, Judith Baxter suggests that girls find it hard to speak effectively in public contexts because of the 'powerless ways they are positioned in the classroom (and the world) by the discourse of gender differentiation' (1999b: 232). Given the claim that women have an 'interloper' status as a minority in elite institutions (Eckert 1989, see also Chapter Five, section 5.7., p.151) it could be that in male-dominated contexts like the House of Commons in which adversarial norms are institutionalised and highly valued, women do not have access to valued 'acts' such as the use of adversarial language. Instead they can put themselves 'beyond reproach' by using non-adversarial language as 'proof of worthiness'.

Some women MPs use adversarial language in their questions and responses (for example the Conservative MP who scores eight adversarial 'points' for a question – see Table 16, section 6.5.4., p.198 above). Although this example is an exception, it suggests that there are differences between women MPs' use of adversarial features: an argument against the view of women's non-adversarial language as 'natural' and therefore applicable to all women MPs. This links to Goodwin's (1990) criticism of using the notion of a de-contextualised co-operative/competitive dichotomy to explain linguistic sex differences. Furthermore, both Goodwin (1990) and Baxter (1999b) find that in single-sex groups girls and boys exhibit both competitive and co-operative linguistic behaviour. Therefore, it is likely to be the characteristics of mixed-sex interaction in certain contexts (in which boys or men tend to be dominant speakers, and in which adversarial language is valued or rewarded), rather than characteristics of women as a group, that most affect language use.

These explanations will be further investigated by comparing these findings with those from the new Scottish Parliament in Chapter Eight. The Scottish Parliament differs from the House of Commons in some key respects: It is a new assembly

which aims to be 'less confrontational' (Brown 2000) than the House of Commons; it has a higher proportion of women MSPs (37%); and women have been involved in the creation of the new parliament from its inception. If women's use of adversarial language (and the rule-breaking activities discussed in the previous chapter) is to some extent determined by the context in which it takes place, then it is likely that women's and men's linguistic behaviour will vary between these two parliamentary assemblies.

Notes

¹ See Appendix 3, p.361 for a full list of Question Times in the 60-hour data corpus.

² The question times used for this smaller corpus are marked with a '#' in the description of the data corpus in Appendix 3, p.361.

³ Where MPs had a subsidiary question this was not counted because in order to compare the numbers and type of questions asked by each group the number of questions asked by each MP had to be the same. The term 'question' is used here to refer to the entire contribution made in one turn by an MP, which always consisted of at least one interrogative form but can also include declarative statements and assertions. In section 6.5.5 the form of one interrogative (the 'main' question) in an MP's turn was recorded. This is explained fully at the beginning of that section.

⁴ This differs from the number of questions asked by men and women in question time sessions in the whole 60-hour data-corpus (see Tables 4 and 5, Chapter Five p.132).

⁵ This percentage is notional as some MPs in each party may have asked more than one question.

⁶ 34% of Labour MPs' questions were asked by women and 66% by men. The proportion of male to female MPs in the Labour party is approximately four male MPs to one female MP. Therefore the number of questions asked shows a lower ratio of male to female MPs (approximately three male MPs asking a question to every one female MP asking a question) than exists in the party as a whole. Within the Conservative party there is a ratio of approximately twelve male MPs to one female MP whereas the ratio of male to female Conservative MPs asking questions is approximately 13 male MPs to one female MP. MPs belonging to the Liberal Democrat Party asked 10% of all the questions, which is a slightly higher proportion of questions than the 7% of Liberal Democrat MPs in the House of Commons as a whole, although no female Liberal Democrat MPs asked a question even though 8% of Liberal Democrat MPs are female. MPs from other parties asked 4% of the questions which is also close to the 5% representation of these parties in the House of Commons. There were no questions asked by the 2 female MPs from other parties.

⁷ The proportion of MPs in each status group in each party differs according to the size of the party as a whole and the number of official appointments and duties within each party. For example, the Labour party with 417 MPs has more MPs than any of the other parties and therefore will have more MPs in each status category. Additionally, as the Labour party is the government it also has many more official roles, positions and appointments than the opposition parties (such as parliamentary private secretaries and under-secretaries of state), so it is likely to have a higher proportion of mid status MPs than other parties. There are also more high status MPs in the Labour party in comparison to the other parties as positions such as that of junior Minister exist in the Labour party, whereas opposition parties only have one 'Shadow' minister or spokesperson for each government department. In a small party like the Liberal Democrats it is likely that every MP will have some extra responsibility (such as the membership of a select committee) as typically each party is asked for a representative on each committee. Therefore there will be fewer lower status MPs in small parties and a higher proportion of mid and high status MPs. The problem of the differing proportions of MPs in each status category in different parties means that status can only be commented on here in relation to the number of MPs in each status group asking questions in this particular data corpus, it is not possible to relate these figures to the numbers of MPs of different status categories in the House of Commons as a whole.

⁸ It should be noted here that there are some differences in the numbers of men and women MPs asking questions in the 60-hour data corpus (Tables 4 and 5, Chapter Five, p.132) compared with the numbers asking questions in the smaller data corpus used in this chapter (Tables 11, p.189, and

12, p.190). In the 60-hour data corpus men asked 93% of questions in PMQT sessions, and in the smaller corpus they asked 86% of questions. In the 60-hour corpus women asked 17% of DQT questions and in the smaller corpus 22% of questions. The finding that women do not participate as much as men in PMQT sessions is therefore confirmed by the data in both corpora. However, the data from the 60-hour data corpus shows that women MPs ask DQT sessions in proportion to their representation in parliament as a whole, whereas in the smaller corpus it appears that women ask disproportionately more questions.

⁹ This also confirms the finding in Chapter Five that men and women participate equally in 'legal' turns.

¹⁰ As there were 99 non-adversarial questions, the numbers in Table 14 can also be viewed as approximate percentages.

¹¹ The following table shows the question forms used in PMQT sessions.

	Labour		Conservative		LibDem		Other	
Male/female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Question form:								
1) conducive + will	17	9	15	1	7		2	
2) conducive + do	6	4	9					
3) conducive + isn't it...			6		1			
4) Other conducive	3		3				2	
5) WH-type	5		3		2			
6) Other non-conductive	4							

¹² Methodological problems involved with this investigation include the difficulty of comparing different groups of different sizes. Although the numbers of adversarial questions and responses produced by each group were calculated as a proportion of those groups, some of the groups (for example female Conservative MPs) produced a very small number of different types of questions.

¹³ The following table shows the function of MPs Questions categorised into six main functional types.

	Labour		Conservative		LibDem		Other	
Male/female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Question function								
1) critical of government	1		22	1	3			
2) praises government	7	5						
3) Asks for information	6	2	7					
4) Asks for action	12	3	6		6		4	
5) critical of Conservatives	9	2			1			
6) Praises Cons.								
7) Other		1	1					

Chapter Seven: Humour and Irony in the House of Commons

7.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to expand and broaden the analysis carried out in Chapters Five and Six of the thesis into the extent to which men and women MPs differ with respect to their linguistic practices in debates and question times in the House of Commons. One of the most striking characteristics of the House of Commons is that although it is an extremely formal, regulated forum in which serious debate takes place, there are many examples of humorous exchanges, banter and ironic gestures. These non-serious exchanges can be viewed as having particular functions, and as a departure from the official norms of serious debate in which a humorous or ironic ‘key’ (Hymes 1972a, see Chapter Four, section 4.3., p.91) replaces the usual gravitas of debate proceedings. The ability of MPs to manipulate and change the ‘key’ of a speech event from its serious norm to a marked humorous or ironic tone is likely to construct them as powerful participants in the debating chamber.

Section 7.2. analyses the functions of humour, and attempts to establish the extent to which this may be a gendered linguistic practice. Section 7.3. identifies examples of the male practice of making sexist and sexual jokes as one of the ways in which male norms of the House of Commons are reinforced and maintained. In section 7.4. the practice of ‘filibustering’ is analysed as a rule-breaking practice that exploits the serious ‘key’ of debates in order to gain political advantage. The full 60-hour data corpus of video recordings is used for this analysis, which comprises not only the debates and Question Times used in Chapters Five and Six, but all the different types of speech event which occur in the debating chamber, including Private Member’s Debates, Private Notice Questions, Statements by Government Ministers and Opposition Debates¹.

7.2. Humour in House of Commons Speech events

Within the 60-hour data corpus described above there are many instances of humorous exchanges. The frequency with which humorous talk occurs is in some

ways surprising, as it has been suggested that whilst humour is pervasive in casual conversation, it is typically less frequent in formal contexts (Adelsward 1989, Mulkay 1988). This suggests that humour has particular functions within the context of House of Commons debating chamber. Additionally, in the data corpus humorous talk is mostly produced by male rather than female MPs. This section aims to identify the functions of humorous talk in speeches using examples from the data corpus, and then to suggest some reasons why this may be a gendered linguistic practice.

Assuming that laughter can be linked to humour, many of the instances of laughter in the House of Commons are constructed within adversarial exchanges (see Transcripts 12, p.165 and 13, p.167). For example, when Tony Blair attacks the opposition leader, William Hague, in Prime Minister's Question Time it is common for members of his party to laugh and cheer at every point 'scored' by Blair against his opponent. These personal attacks and political jibes are regarded as examples of 'humorous talk' for the purposes of this analysis, and the humour is seen as an integral part of the adversarial attack. The laughter of MPs in these exchanges is part of the verbal assault upon an opponent, rather than a spontaneous response to a humorous utterance.

Transcript 20 (below), shows that although Ian McCartney's comment about his own accent and Michael Fabricant's hair (on line 5) is clearly intended to be humorous, it does have an adversarial function as well. The humour is offered as a response to a serious question so it serves change the 'key' of the debate and to belittle the content of the question and the questioner. What is unusual about this type of humour (compared to the other types of personal attacks studied in Chapter Six) is that the topic (Fabricant's hair) is ridiculous², and that it is accompanied by a self-deprecating remark by Ian McCartney about his own accent.

Transcript 20: Trade and Industry Questions (1) (02/04/98 Video extract 12)

Key

MF = Michael Fabricant (Conservative), IM= Ian McCartney (Labour Minister),

1MP = the voice of one MP, MPs = the voices of a number of MPs

Underline = particular emphasis on word or syllable

(.) = pause of under a second (1) = timed pause in seconds

(laughter) = noises made by the CMP [laughter] = noises made by a group of MPs

- 1MF: what does the chairman of the low pay commission say about what the
2 minimum wage should be in Northern Ireland say (.) compared to
3 south east United Kingdom (1)
MPs: [hear hear]
4IM: I'll I'll deal with the Honourable Gentleman (.) if he doesn't mention
5 my accent I won't mention his hair (6)
6MPs: [laughter]
71MP: It's not his hair (4)
8MPs [laughter]
9IM: m my Honourable (1) my Honourable friend er from a sedentary
10 position er (.) mentioned it is not his hair (.) I would not be so so cruel
11 as to suggest such a thing (2)
12MPs [laughter]
13IM: er er c c could I say to the Honourable gentleman (.) he is trying hard
14 to to defend the indefensible (.) the truth of the matter is (.) that the
15 British people want the National Minimum Wage to meet the needs
(turn continues)

In this example of humorous talk the self-deprecating reference may be a strategy by the speaker which allows him to ridicule an opponent whilst making the humour seem more acceptable because he is also directing it at himself. Transcript 21 shows another example of self-deprecating humour by the same MP.

Transcript 21: Trade and Industry Questions (2) (02/04/98 Video extract 12)

TB: Tim Boswell (Conservative trade and Industry Spokesperson)

IM: Ian McCartney (Labour Minister)

1TB: by that stage it will be clear for all to see (.) whether as usual on these
2 matters the minimum (.) the Minister of state has been rolled over and
3 had to accept (.) a compromise figure of shall we say (.) three pounds
4 sixty an hour (1)

5IM: well I'm a pretty difficult person to roll over (2) although once I start

6MPs: [laughter]

7IM: rolling it is difficult to stop (2)

8MPs [laughter]

9IM: c can I suggest to the Honourable Gentleman the answer to his

10 question is quite simply no (.) we made it clear (turn continues)

Here Ian McCartney's initial response to a serious question is humorous (lines 5-7), and self deprecating (because it refers to his own personal appearance). As in Transcript 20 however, it does fulfil an adversarial function in that the response changes a serious question into a humorous one, and therefore ridicules the questioner. However, examples from Question Time exchanges show that it is possible (and common practice) to ridicule and belittle an opponent without using humour. Here McCartney and his opponents are choosing humour as an alternative key to a more straightforward and serious verbal attack. The reason for this may be that the use of humour in these examples actually indicates a degree of cross-party solidarity. The self-deprecating nature of McCartney's humour diffuses any real hostility and emphasises that both he and his opponent are on the same level. In this way the use of humour may signal a shared membership (over-riding party political differences) in which adversarial norms are understood to be an accepted superficial enactment of the differences between MPs. This solidarity between male MPs may also be one of the ways in which the culture of the 'gentleman's club' is perpetrated.

Other possible functions of this type of humorous talk may be as a 'time buying' strategy where the humorous talk allows the responding MP time to construct a

reply. McCartney also appears to be inviting the audience of other MPs to respond to his humour as he leaves time for laughter at the end of his turn. Within this time the humour can also be developed by other MPs. This is shown clearly in Transcript 20 where an MP intervenes illegally to contribute to the humour (line 7) which is then responded to by McCartney (line 9).

Humorous talk may also function to keep the attention of the MPs in the chamber. Just as collective illegal interventions (such as cheering and shouting) serve to involve the audience in what is being said, so humour and the response of laughter serves to direct MPs' attention towards the content of speeches. An example of how humour arrests the attention of other MPs occurs in the same Question Time session when McCartney returns once more to the humour originated in Transcript 20. This is shown in Transcript 22 below.

Transcript 22: Trade and Industry Questions (3) : 02/04/98

IM = Ian McCartney (Labour Minister)

- 1IM: I put a question to the Honourable Gentleman (.) do you know of any
2 country in the world (.) who have introduced a National (.) a National
3 minimum wage for hairdressing that has stopped those in that country
4 from having a haircut (.) it is absolute nonsense to suggest that people
5MPs [laughter]
5 people (.) will lose will lose out by the introduction of a National
6 Minimum Wage (3)
7MPs [laughter]

Here some twenty minutes after the humorous talk represented in Transcript 20, McCartney alludes to hairdressing and 'getting a haircut' (lines 3-4), but it is not until line six when he completes the turn that the other MPs in the chamber fully comprehend the allusion. The humour in this turn is not as overt as that in Transcript 20, but as it does serve to gain the attention of the MPs at a point in the day when there is a lot of talking and movement in the chamber because Prime Minister's Question Time is about to start.

The fact that humorous talk in the data corpus most commonly begins in the first utterances made by a new speaker also suggests that it may have a time gaining or attention gaining function. Humorous talk can be seen as a way of allowing a new speaker to set up a speaking turn, both to organise what she/he is going to say and to make sure that the audience is listening. Transcript 23 shows an example of this type of ‘setting up’ humorous talk.

Transcript 23: Amendments to crime and Disorder Bill (22/06/98)

VC= Vernon Coaker (Labour backbencher)

1VC: can I first of all Mr Deputy Speaker apologise er to the House for the
2 fact that er that er I too missed er much of the er contributions from the
3 respective front benches (.) er and could I ask the Home Secretary
4 whether it is possible to have such an anti-social behaviour order on
5 some of our train companies (laughs) so so that we can actually arrive
6 on time and er when we plan to and when we plan to do (.) er on a on a
7 serious point can I just very much agree (turn continues).

Another common feature of humorous talk is that it stretches over a number of turns and is constructed between different MPs. Often a Question Time session will have a topic which is exploited for humorous purposes. An example of this occurred in a Prime Minister’s Question Time in the data corpus when the Prime Minister began by listing his engagements for the day which included an appointment to be interviewed on the World Wide Web. This is alluded to throughout the session. Firstly, Dennis Skinner MP starts his question to the Prime Minister ‘When I was surfing the internet today...’ which creates much laughter from MPs. The Prime Minister responds to this by saying that he had come across a website called ‘meet your heroes live’ which included Dennis Skinner ‘Madonna, the Wombles and the Spice Girls’ which is also responded to with laughter from MPs. Finally Hague uses the running joke in an adversarial way when he says that he’s not surprised the Prime Minister needs two weeks to prepare questions for the internet sessions as he certainly cannot answer them live.

The functions of humour within debates therefore fall into two broad categories. Firstly humour has an organisational function whereby it helps to start an MP's speech, or it keeps the attention of the listeners. Secondly the use of humour has a range of functions related to the nature of the humorous mode itself. According to Mulkay (1988) 'humorous' and 'serious' can be thought of as distinct modes where 'humorous' is the subordinate mode. Mary Crawford claims that:

The key to understanding how people accomplish serious interactional goals through this subordinate mode of discourse is the recognition that people can use humor to convey messages that they can then deny, or develop further, depending upon how the message is received by the hearer. Because it is indirect and allusive, the humor mode protects the joker from the consequences that his or her statement would have conveyed directly in the serious mode.
(1995: 134)

This idea of the humour allowing the speaker to 'get away with' more than is possible in the serious mode or 'speak 'off the record'' (Eggins and Slade 1997: 156) is particularly pertinent in debates where the whole speech event is a competitive arena. Opponents can score more 'points' by using humour than they can by just using the serious mode. Whilst humour can be used to score points against opponents it can also function to minimise the threat to the 'positive face' (Brown and Levinson 1978) of participants. This means that whilst using humour to score points against a participant, their membership within the social group is not necessarily threatened. In some cases (as with the disability joke described below) humour can be used to strengthen or affirm positive face.

As well as the function of minimising a participant's accountability for their actions, humour can also allow taboo topics to be included in conversations: 'When the taboo topic is framed as a joke it does not become part of the 'real' discourse' (Crawford:1995 134). There is evidence to suggest that humour is used in debates to allude to taboo topics. In an interview with an MP who uses a wheelchair, the MP states that she uses humour in order to broach the taboo subject of her disability. She noticed that when she first spoke in debates nobody intervened during her speeches:

I think they were just frightened of me well not of me but of the wheelchair. They didn't want to appear to be barracking the poor cripple to put it as bluntly as that (...). But they know me now, I can take it and I can be funny. The last time I was speaking at Prime Minister's questions I started off with a joke...(describes joke about using a wheelchair).
(Appendix 2, Interview A, Lines 330-335)

This MP uses humour to broach the topic of her disability in order to show other MPs that she is a member of their group, that she can 'take it', and does not need to be treated differently from other MPs. In addition to the taboo topic of disability other taboo topics such as sexual activity and sexist jokes are frequently referred to in debates. These topics are discussed in section 7.3. below.

Having outlined some of the possible functions of humorous talk in debates and Question Times it is now possible to consider the frequency of the use of humour by MPs in the data corpus. It is clear that for some MPs humour forms part of their personal rhetorical style. Most of the occurrences of humorous talk by male MPs were by Dennis Skinner, Donald Dewar and Ian McCartney. These three MPs all have a high status within the Parliament as Dewar and McCartney were Ministers at the time the debates took place, and Skinner has been an MP for many years and is generally regarded as one of the best speakers in the House of Commons. It is clear then, that the use of humour varies greatly between speakers, and it may be that an MP's position within the parliamentary hierarchy in terms of rank and prestige is a factor in the frequency with which they produce humour. This is difficult to ascertain because Ministers and high status MPs get more speaking turns in debates and Question Times than backbench MPs.

Evidence from other settings provides support for a link between humour and status. Ruth Laub Coser (1960) and Franca Pizzini (1991) undertook research into humorous talk in mixed-sex hierarchical settings (a psychiatric work group and a maternity ward). Coser found that humour followed the staff hierarchy of rank and prestige, with those at the top producing more humour and directing it downward. Pizzini also found that the initiators and targets of humour mirror the hospital hierarchy. Additionally, Ruth Coser found that whilst female staff members demonstrated a capacity for humour they deferred to males who produced 99 out of 103 witticisms at staff meetings. As Crawford notes 'Men

made more jokes; women laughed harder' (1995: 144). Pizzini noticed that nurses who joked amongst themselves failed to do so in the presence of doctors. Also, when humorous remarks were initiated by someone low in the hierarchy, the intended recipients 'let then fall into silence without laughing', preventing the humour from disrupting the status quo (1991: 481). Similarly, in the data corpus of debates very few instances of humorous talk were produced by women MPs. Apart from a few humorous adversarial exchanges produced by female Ministers in Question Times there was only one example of a joke made by a female backbench MP. This is shown in Transcript 24 below.

Transcript 24: Prime Minister's Question Time (01/07/98)

MM = Margaret Moran (Labour backbencher)

1MM: will my right Honourable Friend join me in congratulating all of those
2 who signed a deal this week er an iniv innovative leasing deal (.)which
3 will bring one hundred and seventy million pounds worth of private
4 investment and four and half thousand jobs to Luton airport (.) a deal
5 which will retain that airport in public ownership despite all of the
6 efforts of the previous government (.) will he look to ways of
7 extending this public private partnership arrangement to other areas of
8 the public sector (.) and when he is next asked whether he has wafted
9 in from paradise (.) as I'm sure he often is (.) will he be able to
10 honestly answer (.) no Luton airport

Here the female MP uses humour at the end of her speech by alluding to a 1970s television commercial which mentioned Luton airport (lines 9-10). While she is speaking there is a lot of noise in the chamber, so it may be that she is using humour here to attract the attention of other MPs. As in Pizzini's research however, the response to her joke is minimal and only a few MPs respond to her joke with laughter.

In attempting to explain the differential use of humour by men and women previous research has found that women's humour in conversations is more often context bound and 'jointly created out of the ongoing talk' (Jenkins 1985: 138)

and less often performance-related than male conversational humour. In another study of 'what makes people laugh' in conversations Ervin-Trip and Lampert (1992) observe that women's comments were judged to increase camaraderie and empathy more often than men's. In the same mixed-sex study men were found to be more likely to initiate a humorous key than women, whilst women were more likely to collaborate and build upon someone else's humorous remarks than men (Ervin-Trip and Lampert 1992). In their study of self-deprecating humour Ervin-Trip and Lampert found that the self deprecations of the men were often exaggerated, unreal or false 'a kind of Walter Mitty fantasy' (1992: 115) and that men's remarks often took the form of 'flip wisecracks' rather than the personal, true anecdotes more often produced by women.

Whilst the research outlined above was carried out on informal conversations rather than more public arenas, the performance element of the men's humour seems particularly relevant to the House of Commons and public speaking in general. Also, if women's humour tends to be supportive and collaboratively produced it follows that the adversarial House of Commons is not a place in which this type of humour can be produced. Humour is seldom produced in the debating chamber by women, and frequently by men. This may be because of the ways in which humour is received by the audience. As Ervin-Tripp and Lambert point out 'laughter is a spontaneous index of affect which is rewarding enough to get people to make jokes and other humorous moves in order to evoke laughter' (1992: 108). In the same way that Pizzini found that humour made by low status participants was not responded to and thus the status quo was maintained, it could be that the male-dominated House of Commons recognises the value of male humour and therefore offers this 'reward' of laughter to men. Female humour may not be valued or recognised as belonging to the dominant discourse so for women the reward of laughter is not forthcoming and neither therefore is the incentive to contribute humour. Harriet Harman MP (who has twenty years of experience of speaking in the House of Commons) refers to the difficulty of creating humour when she says '*you have to feel very much at your ease when you are making a joke otherwise you are taking a risk*' (Appendix 2, Interview D, line 380). She also says that '*It's all very well for the men to be cracking jokes as*

they're amongst their own but women are in a much more hostile territory' (lines 351-2).

The identification of women being in 'hostile territory' links to the description of women in public institutions having an 'interloper' status (Eckert 1998). As mentioned above, male MPs' humour may signal cross-party solidarity which may also marginalise women MPs. Although superficially this humour consists of adversarial exchanges of 'one up-manship', these exchanges depend upon a background assumption of co-operation. As Deborah Cameron observes: 'even if the speakers, or some of them, compete, they are basically engaged in a collaborative and solidary enterprise (reinforcing the bonds within the group by denigrating the people outside it)' (1998b: 279).

Alternatively, Male MPs may be using the collaborative enterprise of humour to engage in a type of verbal duelling where points are scored (Cameron 1998b: 279). Either way, this co-operative competition appears to be between men and not between women in the House of Commons. Harriet Harman MP is explicit about the gendered nature of humour:

I think that when you are making a joke you are asserting the way that you are as at home as anyone else and it kind of just doesn't work. It just looks phoney because everybody knows that women are not as at home, unless they are Margaret Thatcher. If you are Prime Minister you've got so much else in terms of your command of the situation so she would make jokes and put people down in a humorous way. But you don't have the underdogs cracking a joke basically and women are the underdogs'.
(Appendix 2, Interview D, Lines 359-367)

Whether 'underdogs' in terms of status or gender this analysis of humour suggests that MPs' use of humorous talk differs according to both these factors. The use of humour in general can therefore be viewed as a gendered linguistic practice in debates as female MPs seldom use humour in their speeches. One type of humour that is often used by male MPs and not by female MPs is sexist humour. This can be seen as an example of denigrating women outside the (male) group and reinforcing the dominant male culture in debates.

7.3. Sexual and Sexist Humour

Examples of sexist and sexual humour are common in the data corpus, and are made exclusively by men. Sexual humour and the assumptions underlying sexual jokes about male-female relationships ‘may function both to express male dominance and to support and strengthen it’ (Crawford 1995:145). Mulkay (1988) has examined the representation of women in men’s sexual humour and found there to be four basic principles. Drawing on Legman’s (1968) research into male jokes about sex these principles are the primacy of intercourse (all men want is sex); the availability of women (all women are sexually available even if they pretend not to be); the objectification of women (women exist to meet men’s needs and are passive); and the subordination of women’s discourse (women should be silent) (Mulkay 1988:134-151).

There are examples of male MPs’ jokes about sex in the data corpus which are based on these principles. In Transcript 25 below Nick Palmer jokes about how often men think about sex:

Transcript 25: Third Reading of the Finance Bill (1) (01/07/98 Video extract 13)

NP: Nick Palmer (Labour Backbencher) 1MP = An unidentified male MP

1NP: we often criticise Ministers for Departmental-itis (.) and for focussing
2 exclusively on their area (.) and I think that we in the Chamber are
3 also somewhat also guilty of that (.) but er (.) as typical debates like
4 this one (.) you get specialists in their particular area coming in (.) and
5 so today we have er more finance nerds (.) er than you’ll see in a
6 month of Sundays anywhere else (.) um and er the (.) it is said that the
7 average man thinks about sex every twenty minutes of the day (.) and I
8 think the population at large would be alarmed to know that in our
9 little sub-population there are people who think more often than that
10 about the public sector borrowing requirement (2) (laughs)

111MP: not all of us

MPs: [laughter]

12NP: (laughs) I'll
13 exempt the Honourable Member (1) (laughs) now the I'd like to look at
14 three aspects of how the finance Bill affects different (turn continues)

This joke fulfils the principle identified by Legman and Mulkay that men's jokes about sex assume the primacy of intercourse. It is men who think about sex every twenty minutes rather than women. Although the joke is that the MPs present in the debate think more often than every twenty minutes about financial matters, the joke is extended by another male MP who affirms that he thinks more often about sex than finance. It is noteworthy that this debate is proposed by two female Ministers³ who are somewhat excluded from this joke as it primarily applies to men.

Another sexual joke about a Ministerial female MP is when Margaret Hodge is described by a male MP as being 'seduced'⁴:

Transcript 26: Debate on Further Education (06/07/98 Video extract 4)

PW: Phil Willis (Liberal Democrat spokesperson) SP = Speaker

1PW: the Select Committee has recognised the problems of FE funding (.)
2 and the new resources it proposes are exceedingly welcome (.) but (.)
3 I believe that the treasury has seduced the select committee (.) and
4 its expectations as er not obviously the Honourable member for
5 Barking Mr Deputy Speaker (.) I would never accuse anyone of
6 seducing er seducing her (.) but um (.) sh she she is far no no she (1)
MPs: [laughter]
7 I I think at this point I will move on but um (1)
MPs: [laughter]
8SP: order (.) perhaps it would be helpful if the Honourable Gentleman
9 found another simile (.) Mister Willetts (1)
MPs: [laughter]
10PW: I I do believe I do believe that the hand of the Treasury has been
11 on Labour members in the select committee (.) and er

121MP: that's worse

13PW: no it isn't (.) um and that in fact what the Honourable Member for

14 Barking was in fact er honest enough to say that she did not feel that

15 they'd gone far enough (turn continues)

In this example the joke fulfils the second and third of the principles identified above. Applying the word 'seduced' to Margaret Hodge at once makes her seem sexually available and causes her to be objectified. The intervention by the Deputy Speaker recognises that the joke infringes the rights of the MP to whom it is applied, but the intervention itself is made in a joking way and the Deputy Speaker also collaborates in the construction of humour.

As well as jokes about sex, humour in debates can also be directed towards topics about women. Transcript 27 shows an unusual joke where Frank Dobson makes a joke in response to a serious question about the treatment of women:

Transcript 27: Health Department Questions 02/06/98

PS = Phyllis Starkey (Labour Backbencher)

FD = Frank Dobson (Health Minister)

PS: can I ask my Right Honourable Friend (.) in making appointments to Hospital Trust Boards (.) whether he has ever knowingly appointed anyone who advocates chaining women prisoners to their beds as an aid to childbirth (1)

FD: well er er well er er (.) (smiles) no no Madam Speaker (.) but I I work on the pre-supposition that nobody's perfect (laughs) (turn continues)

In this example Phyllis Starkey's question criticises the actions of the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson. This is presumably why his response contains a humorous retaliation. However, the fact that Dobson reacts to a serious question from a woman about women in this way seems to indicate that he places little value on the concerns of both Phyllis Starkey and the women in question.

Other examples of jokes made about women include comments made through illegal interventions or barracking (see also Chapter Five, section 5.5.2.1., p.141).

Transcript 28: Defence Questions (06/04/98)

CR = Christine Russell (Labour Backbencher) JR = John Reid (Defence Minister)

- 1 CR: Does the Minister agree with me (.) that we should re-examine the role
2 of the T.A. (.) and as I have a very large T.A. presence in my
3 constituency (.) I would like the Minister to at least consider giving the
4 T.A. perhaps a more heavyweight role (.) than what they have at the
5 moment (1)
6 1MP: heavyweight
7 7MPs: [laughter]
8 JR: can I er thank my honourable Friend for that
9 helpful (2)
10 10MPs: [laughter]
11 JR: intervention er I think she is absolutely right we should
12 consider giving the Territorial Army a more usable more relevant (.)
13 and as she said more heavyweight role (1)
14 14MPs [laughter]
15 JR: in that direction (.) I also
16 agree with her that..(turn continues)

In this example when Christine Russell refers to the Territorial Army being given a more heavyweight role male MPs in the Conservative opposition laugh and repeat the word 'heavyweight' (line 6). The humour here is created because the repeated word 'heavyweight' is used to refer to the physical appearance of Christine Russell. The Defence Minister John Reid supports Russell by thanking her for her question (line 8) and repeating the word 'heavyweight' with its originally intended meaning. In doing this Reid shows that he is opposed to the joke created by the opposition MPs. In this example male MPs ridicule both the serious question made by a female MP and her physical appearance.

The occurrence of jokes about sex and sexist jokes about women may discourage women from participating in humour:

When someone sends the message “I consider women to be less than full human beings” framed as humour, it is difficult for others to reject or even directly address the message. After all sexist intention can easily be denied ‘I was only joking’ ‘can’t you take a joke?’ ‘lighten up’ ‘just kidding’. One simple reason that women as a group may appear less humorous is that they are unwilling to participate in their own denigration. (Crawford 1995: 135)

It seems apparent that there is little that women can do to combat these types of jokes and comments. Harriet Harman describes an occasion in a Question Time session when male Conservative MPs started to make squeaking noises when a female MP asked a question because she had a high-pitched voice. Harman says:

It is totally sexist and designed to knock her off course before they’d even heard what her question was. It was a perfectly ordinary question which any man could have asked but she paid a price because she was a young woman and had a high-pitched voice and nothing more.
(Appendix 2, Interview D: Lines 240-255)

Harman refers to the same incident later in the interview when she says that this same MP could not take any action against this treatment:

Saying I’ve been the subject of sexism would be as likely to make her a victim of more of it (..) that can work both ways you can either have people supporting you or you can have people criticising you as a whinger. (Lines 502-510)

These examples of sexual humour and sexist comments made by men can serve to alienate women when they have no possibility to challenge or refute the comments. The fact that women MPs do not make similar jokes or comments against men may indicate their relatively powerless position in relation to male MPs.

7.4. Filibustering.

Filibustering is the process by which a group of MPs from one party attempt to speak for so long in a debate that there is no time left for the debate to be resolved, or no time left for the following debate to be started. It is a tactic which ‘plays’ with and challenges the debating rules for political gain. As mentioned in section 7.1., it is also a process which adopts an ironic or covertly humorous key. The occurrence of filibustering is fairly infrequent as there are only three instances of this process in the sixty-hour data corpus. The majority of MPs participating in the filibusters are men, so this is another gendered linguistic practice that is not typically undertaken by female MPs.

The practice of filibustering is closely related to the analysis of floor apportionment undertaken in Chapter Five. The main aim of the participants is to take and hold the floor for as long as possible whilst remaining within the debating rules. Transcript 29 below shows an example of filibustering taken from a Private Member’s Bill debate. In this case the Conservative male MPs who engineer the filibuster do not oppose the Lord’s amendments to the Fireworks Bill they are discussing, but they aim to ensure that there is no parliamentary time left in which to discuss the following Private Member’s Bill. The amendments proposed by the House of Lords are extremely minor changes to the wording of the Fireworks Bill. Usually these amendments would be passed swiftly by the Speaker reading out the amendment number, and asking ‘Ayes to the right’ (the government bench) who would respond ‘Aye’ (indicating their agreement to the amendments), and then ask ‘Noes to the left’ (to the opposition bench) to which opposition members would remain silent if they agreed with the amendments, or shout ‘No’ if they disagreed. If the response is ‘no’ from the opposition then the amendment has to be debated. There is nothing to stop the opposition bench from shouting ‘no’ to the amendment (in order to waste parliamentary time) even though they agree with the amendments.

In the same way at the end of the debate, the Speaker asks the same question to the respective sides of the House. If the opposition shout ‘no’ again, the MPs have a division and they go to vote. In this fireworks Bill the opposition shouted

'no' at the end of the debate on each amendment which forced a division and therefore wasted time. When the votes were counted it was found that 50 MPs voted for the amendments and none voted against. So the opposition had forced a vote to take place even though they did not want to vote against the Bill. This practice plays with the rules that are in place to ensure the democratic process is fair. For example, any MP is allowed to shout 'no' to an amendment and then change their mind and vote for it in the division. This rule is exploited because opposition members know they are going to vote *for* the amendment when they shout 'no'. Transcript 29 below shows an example of this filibuster in process.

Transcript 29: Private Member's Bill: Fireworks Bill (03/07/98 Video extract 14)

DM = David Maclean (Conservative backbencher) SP = Deputy Speaker

- 1DM: now one accepts that when you draft something like the explosives act
2 er er drafted er or passed into law in eighteen seventy five (.)
3 pyrotechnics and explosives change from time to time (.) new ones get
4 invented and (.) relatively harmless materials wh wh and regulations
5SP: order order (.) I'm listening with patience to the Right Honourable
6 Member (.) but I must remind him that the scope of the amendment
7 to which he is speaking (.) is whether or not (.) regulations made under
8 clauses one two or fourteen three (.) should be subject to the
9 affirmative resolution procedure (.) that point (.) and that point only
10 (.) Mr Maclean
11DM: thank you Mr Deputy Speaker I I shall er er concentrate purely on that
12 (.) I was trying to make a point and I'm sorry I didn't make it precisely
13 enough or or clearly enough (.) that regulations (.) may be a sensible
14 way to deal with the changes in (.) f er explosives or fireworks
15 technology which take place one wouldn't expect to bring in a new act
16 of parliament (.) any time er [or an affirmative]
17SP: [stands] there's no point in the Right
18 Honourable Member repeating his error (.) Mr Maclean
19DM: Mr Deputy Speaker (.) the question before us the was whether the
20 Minister (.) if he uses his powers to amend the explosives act or the

21 fireworks act (.) should be subject to the affirmative or the negative er
 22 procedure (.) the Lordships have said that the affirmative procedure er
 23 would be better in this case (.) er I take the view (.) as I've said to the
 24 House that it is absolutely essential (.) when one hears the view of er
 25 Mr Peter Mason (.) the Director of consumer safety and er er standards
 26 he said on precisely on this point (.) the degree of distress and anxiety
 27 that would justify Ministers coming to parliament (.) even under a
 28 negative resolution procedure (.) to justify some of the actions that
 29 we've talked about (.) would have to be pretty extensive (.) what we
 30 have been anxious to do (.) is make clear that we can take into account
 31 various factors (.) which are not available to us under the nineteen
 32 eighty seven act (.) it is certainly not the intention that these powers
 33 should be exercised for trivial reasons (.) in fact I think that although
 34 subsection two 'a' gives the viaries for the regulations (.) one also has
 35 to pay attention to the political realities (.) we would have to be able to
 36 defend what we were doing through the consultation process (.)
 37 through parliament's scrutiny processes (.) and ultimately the negative
 38 resolution procedure (.) I do not think there is anything further I can
 39 say on that (.) I would say (.) I'm quoting Mr Mason (.) I would say
 40 that the negative resolution procedure (.) that we have a lot of
 41 experience of making resolutions under the nineteen eighty seven act
 42 (.) using this procedure (.) it is certainly one one that I regard as being
 43 effective (.) insofar as we know that the stuff that that we write is
 44 subject to review (.) it is capable of being prayed against (.) I do not
 45 regard that negative resolution procedure as being in any way an
 46 ineffective constraint (.) well that's the view of Mr Peter Mason (.) it
 47 is it is not the view I take er Mr Deputy Speaker (.) we all know that
 48 the Government has embarked on a lot of legislation (.) er which
 49 contains order making powers (.) the vast majority of those are
 50 negative resolution procedure (.) I think it would be (.) a a disservice
 51 to this House if it could be er er (.) er er a disservice to the industry (.)
 52 which er quite legitimately manufacture explosives (.) and er quite er
 53 used by the government used by the military used er er and er
 54 industries which manufacture fireworks (.) quite legitimately for the

55 enjoyment of millions of people (.) if suddenly er they were to find that
 56 the Minister brought forward regulations (.) to amend the principle act
 57 (.) to amend the principle acts (.) and put them through by negative
 58 resolution procedure (.) which no matter what we all may say publicly
 59 about the wonderful scrutiny we give things in this House (.)
 60 inevitably Mr Deputy Speaker when one looks at the committees
 61 upstairs taking (.) er er a resol er a negative resolution er a um er
 62 affirmative resolutions through (.) the amount of scrutiny they get is
 63 not what it used to be shall we say and not what many of us would like
 64 to see (.) the negative resolution procedure allows a huge amount of
 65 important legislation to come onto the statute book (.) I found it very
 66 convenient myself when I was a Minister to use it (.) and any particular
 67 er chance I had to use a negative resolution procedure (.) one jumped
 68 at it (.) one jumped at it because one knew (.) one could
 69SP: the Right Honourable Gentleman must not enter into a discussion
 70 between two different forms of procedure in (.) general (.) the question
 71 is whether these regulations should be subject to the affirmative r er
 72 resolution (.)
 73DM: the particular point Mr Deputy Speaker (.) is that these are very
 74 important acts of Parliament (.) er and the other place has determined
 75 in its amendments that we should have the affirmative resolution
 76 procedure (.) the only general point I was making er was that er
 77 this House does not sometimes give enough scrutiny to other
 78 legislation (.) this legislation (.) and these amendment should have it (.)
 79SP: order er er I er the Hon the Right Honourable member er is now er er
 80 (.) exceeding er er the bounds er for the second time (.) he has repeated
 81 a matter for which I have already reproved him (.) I shall be forced to
 82 look at the Standing Orders if the Right Honourable Gentleman
 83 persists in doing that (.)
 84DM: I have no intention of persisting in doing that Mr Deputy Speaker er
 85 I'm I'm sorry if I misunderstood your your your ruling which I comply
 86 with entirely I was coming to the end of my remarks in any case on this
 87 point (.) because although I was worried about the er other
 88 amendments sent to us (.) by the other place (.) this one I think is an

89 absolutely absolutely essential safeguard (.) if this House and er this
 90 House does have still an important part to play in the conduct of our
 91 National affairs (.) it may be declining but it is still relatively important
 92 (.) where we can take powers (.) to actually make sure that legislation
 93 is scrutinised properly (.) the affirmative resolution is the way to do it
 94 (.) because of the powers in this enormously er er draconian Bill (.) I
 95 believe the other place have done (.) a service to Parliament and a
 96 service to the people of this country by insisting that in this important
 97 regard (.) we at least use the affirmative resolution procedure
 SP: Mr Eric Forth (new speech starts)

In this speech David Maclean is in flagrant disregard of the debate rules. He is discussing general matters about procedure in an attempt to prolong the debate rather than discussing the amendment (whether the Secretary of State should be able to use an affirmative or negative resolution procedure if emergency changes need to be made to the implementation of the Bill). The Deputy Speaker intervenes to attempt to stop the filibuster (on lines 5, 17, 69 and 79) but does not stop the MP from prolonging his speech. David Maclean shows very little respect for the Speaker's authority as is shown when the Speaker intervenes (lines 5-10) saying that he is 'losing patience' with the MP for talking about matters outside the amendments under consideration. Maclean replies by apologising for not making what he was saying 'clear enough', implying that it is not he who is at fault, but rather the Speaker for misunderstanding what he was saying. The Speaker asserts his authority by intervening again to ask that the MP 'does not repeat his mistake'.

The ability to resist and challenge the Speaker's authority was identified in Chapter Five as the strongest expression of an MP's dominant behaviour in debates. It is clear that the process of filibustering is undertaken by MPs who regard themselves as being powerful enough to disregard the Speaker's interventions. Furthermore, the tone of the filibustering speeches is highly ironic. This irony exploits the fact that everyone in the chamber is aware that the MP is breaking the rules, but nothing can be done to stop him. An example of this ironic tone is the repeated emphasis on the 'importance' of what everyone present

knows is an utterly unimportant amendment. For example on lines 89-97 Maclean exaggerates the usefulness of the amendment by saying that the Lords have 'done a service to the people of this country' by recommending the changes. This type of ironic statement is treated as humorous by the other MPs taking part in this filibuster. During Maclean's speech, the video recording clearly shows⁵ another MP, Eric Forth laughing and sniggering when Maclean makes an obvious deviation from the topic of the amendment, and when he defies the Speaker's interventions. Forth attempts to cover his laughter by hiding behind the 'order papers' and putting his hands in front of his mouth, but his amusement at the situation is clear. This covert humour is a highly collaborative enterprise in which the amusement is shared by the MPs taking part in the filibuster (and their political party).

The second example of a filibuster takes place in the third reading of the Finance Bill in July 1998. As in the Fireworks debate, this Bill would normally be passed very quickly but on this occasion the government are responsible for the filibuster. This is extremely unusual because filibustering is normally thought of as a weapon of the opposition used to oppose government legislation. In this case the government are filibustering their own proposed legislation in order to decrease the amount of time spent on the following debate. The following debate is a debate upon the Lords' amendments to the Teaching and Higher Education Bill which proposes the introduction of student loans. This is a highly unpopular policy and many Labour as well as opposition MPs (as well as the House of Lords) disagree with its introduction. It is possible to identify that a filibuster is taking place because of the extreme length of the speeches and the number of Speaker's interventions instructing the speakers to stop discussing irrelevant matters. More evidence for a filibuster taking place is provided by the references to the strategy made by MPs from other parties. This is shown in Transcript 30 when Alex Salmond explains his reasons for not giving way to a government MP.

Transcript 30: The third reading of the Finance Bill (1) (01/07/98)

AS = Alex Salmond (SNP Party Leader)

1AS: I'm not giving way to the Honourable Member and I'll tell him exactly
2 why (.) there is more than a suspicion (.) on this side of the House (.)
3 that Government Members are extremely anxious not to move onto
4 the next debate (.) on student loans (.) now I don't make any comment
5 about House of Commons tactics (.) I've used them myself (.) but the
6 Honourable member will forgive me (.) if I don't assist them in
7 delaying an embarrassing debate (.) on student finance which many
8 members in the Labour Party don't want to see (turn continues)

Here the filibuster process and the reasons behind it are explicitly referred to in order to expose the government's tactics. The Conservative MP Nicholas Soames also tries to draw attention to the filibuster in a 'point of order'. This is shown in Transcript 31 below.

Transcript 31: The Third Reading of the Finance Bill (2) (1/07/98)

NS = Nicholas Soames (Conservative backbencher) DS = Deputy Speaker

1NS: Mr Deputy Speaker (.) would you not agree that we are witnessing a
2 sustained and concerted (.) filibuster on on this Bill (.) and and and is it
3 not the case (.) Mr Deputy Speaker that such practice is to be deplored
4 by the Chair
5DS: order (.) the Chair is only aware of speeches which are in order or not
5 in order (.) and er er speeches that I've been hearing have been in order
6 (.) except where I have chosen to er correct them (.) er it has been
7 known for debates on the Third Reading of the Finance Bill to go on
8 for several hours

In this example Soames attempts to draw attention to the filibuster, although his attempt exemplifies the circular argument with which most points of order are

turned down (if something was said in a speech then it must be 'in order' or the Speaker would have ruled it out of order at the time). Despite attempts like these to stop the filibuster the government prolong the debate for two hours and forty minutes. The main participants in the filibuster are male backbench MPs, in particular Christopher Leslie MP and Derek Twigg MP. However, unlike the Fireworks Bill filibuster some female MPs participate. Transcript 32 below shows an intervention made upon Christopher Leslie's speech by an (unidentified) female Labour backbench MP.

Transcript 32: The third reading of the Finance Bill (3) (01/07/98)

FL = Female Labour Backbencher

CL = Christopher Leslie (Labour backbencher)

- 1CL: speaking for myself I am often confused by my own tax affairs (.) and
2 now I can pick up a telephone (.) and speak to a friendly voice on the
3 other end (.) a friendly tax officer on the other end of the line (.) er er
4 explain er my predicament and (.) hopefully get a very simple and er
5 common-sense solution to my situation (.) and this will be available
6 very shortly to the the wider part of the population (.) er a pilot study is
7 being undertaken in terms of er telephone claims for the Inland
8 Revenue (.) and this is I understand a Bill making provision to start this
9 off in Scotland (.)
10 FL: Will my Honourable Friend give way
11 CL: yes I will (.)
12 FL: does my honourable friend agree that this is one of the many measures
13 that this government is considering and beginning to implement (.) that
14 is reducing the burden on industry and on business (.) and that reducing
15 that burden is very important to business (.) and once again that we are
16 listening and taking action (1)
17 CL: well that's right (.) one of things that businesses complain to me about
18 in my constituency (.) is the endless form-filling (turn continues)

This Transcript shows Christopher Leslie's filibustering turn, which is intervened upon by the female Labour MP (line 11). Although the intervening turn is not very long it serves to give Christopher Leslie another topic with which to prolong the debate. This female MP is therefore participating in the filibuster by being part of the group of MPs who are sustaining each other's speaking turns. However, this female Labour MP does not give a speech so her participation in the filibuster is limited. One other female Labour MP, Louise Eilman, takes part in this filibuster by making a speech. However, her speech is extremely short in comparison to those made by her male colleagues. Louise Eilman's speech is seven minutes long whilst Christopher Leslie's speech is 51 minutes long. So in this filibuster, female MPs do participate but in a limited capacity.

The Third reading of the Finance Bill is proposed by two female Ministers, Dawn Primarolo and Helen Liddell. Although Helen Liddell is the Minister responsible for introducing and summing up the debate, neither she nor her Ministerial colleague (Dawn Primarolo) take part in the filibuster. Their speeches are concise and they do not intervene upon filibustering Labour colleagues in order to prolong the debate. In all three examples of filibustering in the data corpus front bench politicians from all parties did not participate. Backbench MPs presumably take responsibility for the filibuster because frontbench MPs cannot be seen to be participating in the dubious pursuit of time-wasting.

After the Third Reading of the Finance Bill is finished, the controversial Lords' amendments to the Teaching and Higher Education Bill (introducing student loans) is discussed. This debate takes one and a half hours and although the amendments suggested by the Lords are supported by MPs from all sides of the House the amendments are turned down by a government majority. The next stage in the Bill is the proposal of a 'Committee of Reasons' to further scrutinise the suggested amendments. The proposal of MPs' names for the committee should be straightforward, but at this point Conservative MPs choose to oppose this appointment process by undertaking another filibuster. This is an expression of Conservative opposition to the government, rather than a concerted attempt to stop the committee being appointed. The same MPs take part in this filibuster (which lasts for twenty minutes) as took part in the Fireworks Bill filibuster

(David Maclean, Eric Forth, Edward Leigh and Nick StAubyn). Two Conservative female MPs take part in this filibuster by making short interventions upon the speeches of their male colleagues.

Based on the examples of filibustering in the data corpus it is possible to claim that filibustering is an example of a linguistic practice which is mainly undertaken by male MPs. Interview data also suggests that filibustering is viewed by some female MPs as a male practice. One female MP suggests some reasons for this:

Because women have been the pressure for making the House of Commons more rational, sort of making the debate more coherent and more transparent, having an argument where there is one but not having an argument where there isn't one. Because women have been in the forefront of the hours changing and because for women time is a commodity which it is not for men then filibustering is a bit of a contradiction in terms for women. (Appendix 2, Interview D, Lines 425-431)

Participants in a filibuster disregard the Speaker's authority as well as the debate rules and the legislative process. The participants themselves often show evident amusement and active enjoyment in the process. These linguistic practices are highly collaborative examples of the way in which the 'key' of a speech event may be changed to a non-serious tone for a particular political advantage.

7.5. Conclusions

The analysis of humorous exchanges in this chapter identified many functions of humour within the debating chamber. As well as the interactional functions of gaining time for the speaker and the attention of the audience, humour was also shown to have particular functions linked to the adoption of a humorous key. These included being able to 'get away with' referring to taboo topics and criticising opponents in a way that would be unlikely to be tolerated if they were presented within the conventional, serious key of debates.

Humorous exchanges have adversarial functions, but the construction of humour has elements of cross-party co-operation which seem to express solidarity or the acknowledgement of male group membership. As there were few examples of women MPs participating in these humorous exchanges, this may be one of the ways in which male MPs (and especially high status male MPs) express a shared membership that excludes women. The use of sexist and sexual humour by male MPs against women MPs is one of the most explicit markers of this exclusion. It has been suggested that increased numbers of women in historically male dominated professions can lead to the 'defensive strengthening of fraternal networks' (Walsh: 2000: 301). Collaborative humour and rule-breaking by male MPs may be one of the ways in which the male culture of the 'gentleman's club' is constructed and strengthened.

The use of humour, sexist jokes and the ironic key adopted for filibustering by male MPs links with the three conditions or actions Judith Baxter identifies as constituting individuals as powerful speakers in public settings (1999b). She observes that dominant boys in the classroom use rule-breaking, the help of a support group (or side-kick), and humour to support their dominant position. It is likely that the humour, collaboration and rule-breaking activities undertaken by male MPs in the House of Commons also constructs their position as dominant and powerful speakers.

Interview data suggests that women MPs feel unable to make jokes because they are in 'hostile territory', which supports the view that women as minorities in professional institutions have an 'interloper' status (Eckert 1998). As interlopers women MPs may choose to adhere to the norm of the serious debate 'key' rather than break with the norm and attempt humour or irony. As with illegal interventions (discussed in Chapter Five), this may be a way in which women MPs attempt to place themselves 'beyond reproach' in terms of the official conventions of debates which imply a seriousness of purpose and real rather than mock conflict between opponents.

Notes

¹ The contents of the data corpus are listed in Appendix 3, p.361.

² The joke that Michel Fabricant's hair is a wig was first made in the print media. The joke in Transcript 20, p.210 is an allusion to this.

³ Helen Liddell and Dawn Primarolo.

⁴ This Transcript has already been included in Chapter Five as an example of an intervention made by the Speaker.

⁵ Video extract 14, Volume II, Part A does not show Forth's behaviour as it occurred at an earlier point in Maclean's speech.

Chapter Eight: Gender and Language in the Scottish Parliament: A comparison with the House of Commons at Westminster

8.1. Introduction

Having arrived at a description of the linguistic practices of male and female MPs in the House of Commons, it is now possible to consider whether these are typical of other political assemblies, or whether the particular cultural and historical make-up of the House of Commons make it unique both in terms of the linguistic features used (such as the adversarial style identified in Chapter Six, or the illegal interventions identified in Chapter Five), and also in terms of the gendered use of these features. In order to consider these questions this chapter compares the linguistic practices of male and female MPs in the House of Commons with those of the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, Edinburgh.

The Scottish Parliament provides a suitable assembly for comparison in that it differs from the House of Commons at Westminster in some key respects: It is a relatively new parliament, opened in 1999; It has a higher proportion of women than the Westminster parliament; and it was designed with democratic and egalitarian notions of representation to the fore (Mitchell 2000). However, as James Mitchell observes, the Westminster parliament was influential in the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and as subsequent sections of this chapter show, many of the speech events, procedures and conventions are the same in both parliaments. This means that it is possible to directly compare the two assemblies (because for example both have identical formats for 'Question Time' sessions), but also to contrast their differences in the key areas identified above which may have a bearing upon the linguistic practices of male and female members.

In order to make this comparison, the first section (8.2.) below describes the Scottish Parliament in terms of its history, members and procedures. Then in section 8.3. floor apportionment and turn-taking in the Scottish Parliament are analysed using a corpus of video data and the results compared with the analysis of floor apportionment in the House of Commons undertaken in Chapter Five.

Section 8.4. uses a small corpus of video-taped Question Times in order to assess whether male and female Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) use the adversarial style identified in Chapter Five of the thesis, and compares these results with those found in the House of Commons. Finally, gendered linguistic practices such as joking, filibustering and sexist comments are identified (as in Chapter Seven of the thesis) and their use in both assemblies compared.

8.2. Description of the Scottish Parliament

8.2.1. The history and development of the Scottish Parliament

This section aims to locate the Scottish Parliament within some of the most important cultural, political and historical contexts that have shaped its development, and which may contribute to its current political and parliamentary style. The historical roots of the current parliament go back to the first recorded parliament in Scotland in about 1326. This existed in different forms until the Treaty of Union in 1707 when Scotland became united with England and the separate parliaments were joined in Westminster. The 'new' current Parliament is the first Scottish Parliament since this treaty, although it still does not have fully devolved powers. This new Scottish Parliament was opened in May 1999. The establishment of the Parliament reflected the broad movement for constitutional change in Scotland from many different political and pressure groups¹. The need for constitutional change was created by a complex combination of factors centring around the fact that voting patterns between Scotland and England had started to diverge from 1979², so that Scottish voters were voting for political parties that were not represented (or only had a very small number of seats) in the Westminster parliament. The voting system was therefore unrepresentative of the political views of the Scottish people (Brown 2000: 543). The creation of a new Scottish Parliament was also seen by some Scottish nationalist interests as the first step towards home rule and eventually independence from the United Kingdom (Mitchell 2000: 605). These factors contributed to the 1989 Claim of Right Declaration and the Scottish Constitutional Convention³ (established in

1989) which were supported by many Scottish Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs.

When the Labour Party came to power in Westminster in May 1997 the new government supported devolution and initiated the Scotland's Parliament White Paper which drew on the work of the Scottish Constitutional Convention and set out plans for a new Scottish Parliament. This was closely followed by a referendum in which a 73% majority of Scottish people voted in favour of the new parliament. In 1998 the Consultative Steering Group⁴ was set up to consider how the parliament would operate. This group published their final report in January 1999, five months before the first Scottish Parliament elections, held on May 6th 1999.

Both the Scottish Constitutional Convention and later the Consultative Steering Group promoted the representation of equal numbers of male and female candidates in the new parliament. Scotland had traditionally had low levels of women's participation in politics. Women's groups, particularly in the Labour party and the trade unions, argued that the new party offered an opportunity to 'right an historic wrong' (Mitchell 2000: 607), and the Liberal Democrat and Labour parties supported the goal of 50:50 representation of male and female MSPs. The goal of equal representation of women in the parliament was helped by Women's groups who campaigned to raise the profile of women in the elections, and perhaps most significantly the 'twinning' of constituencies⁵ for the selection of candidates by the Labour party to ensure that they achieved equal representation in terms of election candidates.

In her article on designing the Scottish Parliament (2000) Alice Brown (one of the members of the Consultative Steering Group) says that demands for a parliament in Scotland were always closely connected to a vision of how it would operate, and that 'in exploring the process of making the Scottish Parliament the technical cannot be divorced from the political' (2000: 542). This is also recognised in the final report of the Scottish Constitutional Convention (1995) which acknowledges this relationship:

From this process we have emerged with the powerful hope that the coming of a Scottish Parliament will usher in a way of politics that is radically different from the rituals of Westminster; more participative, more creative, less confrontational....a culture of openness which will enable the people to see how decisions are being taken in their name and why. the parliament we propose is much more than a mere institutional adjustment. It is a means, not an end. (cited in Brown 2000: 543)

Some of these radical differences between the new Scottish Parliament and Westminster have been put into place. Perhaps the most well-known of these is the fact that a greater proportion of parliamentary work in the Scottish Parliament is carried out in committees⁶. These committees have the power to initiate, scrutinise and investigate legislation and as their membership reflects the political composition of the parliament itself they are seen as one of the main ways in which the assembly is more participative than Westminster. Another striking difference is the U-shaped layout of the debating chamber with the Speaker (the Presiding Officer) located in the middle of the chamber (see Figure 9 below). This layout is thought to make the debating chamber less confrontational⁷ than the House of Commons as MPs do not directly face each other.

According to James Mitchell (2000) the 'new politics' of the Scottish Parliament has three related aspects: new institutions; new processes and a new political culture. In his article Mitchell assesses whether political change has been achieved in these three areas, and concludes that whilst new institutions and processes have been established, the political culture remains similar to that of Westminster. This chapter contributes to this debate in that similarities and differences between the two parliaments are assessed, and in particular the analysis of the 'adversarial style' in section 8.4. will allow an assessment of the extent to which a more consensual style of politics has been achieved within the debating chamber itself.

Figure 9: The layout of the Scottish Parliament debating chamber

Key to Figure 9:

1 = Presiding Officer 2 = Clerks 3 = Press Gallery 4 = VIP Gallery
5, 6 and 7 = Public Galleries 8a and b = MSP's Advisers 9 = Parliament Staff
10 = The Mace

8.2.2. The Composition of the Parliament (1999-2000)

There are 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament, approximately one fifth of the number of MPs that belong to the House of Commons. The Scottish Executive is the equivalent of the Westminster Cabinet, and it has twenty-one Ministers and deputy Ministers in eleven different departments. Fifteen of the Ministers and Deputy Ministers are men, and six women. The head of this executive is the

'First Minister', Henry McLeish. Unlike the parliament at Westminster the Scottish Parliament has two types of MSPs: constituency MSPs and regional MSPs. As the names suggest, constituency MPs represent a named constituency and regional MSPs represent a region of Scotland. There is one MSP for each of the 73 political constituencies in Scotland and seven regional MSPs for each of the eight regions of Scotland, giving a total of 56 regional MSPs. In this way, eight MSPs, one constituency MSP and seven regional MSPs (who are likely to be from a range of political parties) represent one geographical location.

Table 19 (below) shows the numbers of male and female MSPs in the Scottish Parliament as a whole, and in each political party. Table 19 shows that the Scottish Labour Party is the biggest party in the Scottish Parliament (representing 43% of all the seats), and the main opposition party is the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) with 27% of the seats. The Scottish Conservative Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrat Party are roughly the same size (with 15% and 13% of all the seats respectively). The Labour party has a much smaller majority in the Scottish Parliament than it does in Westminster⁸.

Table 19: Numbers of male and female MSPs in each political party

Party ⁹	MSPs		Male MSPs		Female MSPs	
	No.	% of all MSPs	No.	% of party	No.	% of party
Labour	55	43	27	49	28	51
SNP	35	27	20	57	15	43
Conservative	19	15	16	84	3	16
LibDems	17	13	15	76	2	24
other¹⁰	3	2	3	100	0	0
Total	129	100	81	63	48	37

Unlike Westminster, there are three main opposition parties (rather than two) with the SNP as the main opposition party, rather than the Conservative Party as in Westminster.

Table 19 also shows that there is a higher proportion of female MSPs in the Scottish parliament than the proportion of female MPs in Westminster. Overall 37% of MSPs are women (rather than 18% in Westminster). Additionally, the Scottish Labour party has a much greater proportion of female MSPs (51%) than the Labour party in Westminster (24%). The main opposition party in the Scottish Parliament (the SNP) also has a higher proportion of women than the main opposition Conservative Party at Westminster (43% of SNP MSPs are women, whereas only 8% of Conservative MPs are women). The representation of women in the Scottish Conservative Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrat party is also higher than in the corresponding Westminster Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties (see Table 10, Chapter Six, p.189). According to the 'critical mass' theory the fact that the Scottish Parliament has a greater representation of women would predict that female politicians in this assembly could make a greater contribution to politics than their female colleagues in the House of Commons¹¹.

8.2.3. Parliamentary rules and procedures

The speech events in the Scottish Parliament are very similar to those in the House of Commons. There are government and opposition debates, Private Members' Bills, and departmental¹² and First Minister's Question Time Sessions. The main difference is that debates in the Scottish Parliament are allocated a certain amount of time in order to fit all the business of the chamber into working hours (between nine thirty in the morning and five o'clock at night). In this way, debates either start at nine thirty in the morning and finish at midday or they start at three thirty in the afternoon (after the Question Time sessions) and run until five o'clock.

The Presiding Officer is responsible for making sure that the debate is finished in the allocated time. In order to allocate how much time an MSP has for a speech

within a debate the Presiding Officer asks the MSPs who wish to speak in the debate to indicate this to him immediately before the debate starts. They do so by pressing a button on an electronic keypad on their desks. This is conveyed to the Presiding Officer's computer screen so that he can count how many people want to speak and divide the available time between the number of speakers (this process takes a few minutes). In debates in which many MSPs want to contribute, each speech may only last two to three minutes. The Presiding Officer's priority is to include all the people who want to speak rather than ensuring that they have enough time to put across all their views. An added advantage of this electronic system is that the Presiding Officer can see exactly who wants to speak and allocate turns fairly between individuals and political parties¹³. This contrasts with the Westminster parliament which operates as a 'locally managed' system because speaking turns are gained by catching the Speaker's eye. In this case the Speaker must allocate turns by choosing speakers on an impressionistic basis according to which MPs request a turn each time the speaker changes.

The benefits of this electronic voting system are not restricted to the allocation of speaking turns but also improve the efficiency of voting at the end of a debate. At the end of each session (morning and afternoon) a short amount of time is allocated for voting (called 'decision time'). At the end of the debate, the Presiding Officer asks MSPs to vote for or against the motion by the same method (pressing an electronic button on their desks). The presiding officer can then immediately assess whether the motion has been passed or not by looking at his computer screen. This means that the voting process takes a few minutes rather than the half an hour 'divisions' of the House of Commons where members have to physically move in order to vote. This also means that MSPs must be in the debating chamber in order to vote, whereas in Westminster MPs who are not present in the chamber have time to move from other parts of the Westminster buildings in order to vote.

Another main difference between the Scottish Parliament and Westminster is the regulation of parliamentary language. Instead of the formal address terms such as 'My right Honourable Friend', or 'the Right Honourable member for Southgate and Enfield' used in the House of Commons, MSPs can simply use the first and

second names of the MSP to whom they are referring, but they are not allowed to refer to them as 'you'. The Presiding Officer and his Deputies must be referred to by their titles (Standing Orders Rule 7.6.). The only other restrictions are that motions do not carry 'offensive' terms and that MSPs do not accuse each other of lying. In practice, MSPs often refer to each other by their first names which gives the debating chamber a very informal atmosphere, and it is common to hear an MSP thanking someone by their first name when they have given way. Differences in rules and procedures between the Scottish Parliament and Westminster are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

8.3. Floor Apportionment in the Scottish Parliament

8.3.1. Introduction

Having described the Scottish Parliament and made an initial comparison of its composition, rules and procedures with the Westminster parliament, it is now possible to investigate the ways in which MSPs take, hold and yield the floor in debates. In order to compare the two parliaments this analysis is the same as the Conversation Analytic approach used in Chapter Five of the thesis, and also uses the same definitions of 'power' and 'the floor' identified in sections 5.2. and 5.3. From the initial description above it is clear that the two parliaments are similar enough (in terms of the format of the speech events and procedures used) that these definitions are applicable to both assemblies. In this way the control an MSP has over the debate floor is viewed as relating to their power in debates: there are legal (D1) and illegal (D2) debate floors; and certain features linked with floor apportionment are regarded as being indicative of dominant behaviour, such as interruptions and illegal interventions.

In section 8.3.2. below an initial assessment is made of the participation of male and female MSPs in all the debates and questions times in a twelve hour video corpus¹⁴, and this is compared to the overall participation of MPs in all the speech events in the House of Commons video corpus (Chapter Five, section 5.4.3., p.130). Then three complete debates¹⁵ from the full corpus are used to analyse

turn-taking and floor apportionment in the following sections. These three debates together are six hours long, which is a comparable amount of data to that used in the analysis of floor apportionment in the House of Commons debates in Chapter Five, although in that case the data was drawn from extracts of five debates, each of between 60 and 90 minutes long. As in Chapter Five, the following analysis identifies the overall participation of male and female MSPs in the whole corpus (8.3.2.), then in the smaller corpus of three debates legal interventions (8.3.3.), illegal interventions (8.3.4.) and interventions made by the Presiding Officer (8.3.5.) are analysed and compared with House of Commons interventions.

8.3.2. The frequency of participation of male and female MSPs in all speech events in the Scottish Parliament

Before undertaking a detailed analysis of floor apportionment in Scottish Parliament debates this section attempts to establish the amount of legal turns that male and female MSPs take in all speech events in the twelve hour video corpus. When compared with the representation of male and female MSPs in the parliament, this data be used to address the question of how much male and female MSPs contribute to different speech events in the Scottish Parliament overall. Table 20 (below) shows the number and percentage of male and female turns in the whole corpus.

Table 20: Number of male and female (legal) turns in the whole corpus.

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
All debates and Question Times	13	690 mins. 11.5 hrs	532	365	167
Percentage of total number of turns			100	69%	31%

This table shows that overall male MSPs contributed 69% of the total number of turns in the corpus, and female MSPs 31%. This means that female MSPs are slightly underrepresented and male MSPs are slightly over represented in relation to their proportion in the Scottish Parliament as a whole (37% and 63%

respectively). However, as noted in Chapter Five the fact that women MSPs are slightly under-represented may be partly accounted for by the fact that the First Minister is a man, and therefore all responses in First Minister's Question Time are male responses. In order to establish whether this affects the overall contributions made by male and female MSPs, Table 21 shows the turns taken by male and female MSPs in First Minister's Question Times.

Table 21: The number of male and female turns in FMQT sessions.

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
FMQT (all turns)	3	90 mins. 1.5 hours	73	64	9
Percentage of total number of turns				88%	12%
FMQT: Questions Only			37	28	9
Percentage of total number of questions				76%	24%
FMQT: Responses Only			36	36	0
Percentage of total number of responses				100%	0%

Table 21 shows that even when the First Minister's responses are not included, male MSPs ask 76% of the questions in FMQTs and female MSPs 24%. This means that female MSPs are underrepresented more in FMQT sessions (and male MSPs over-represented more) than in the corpus as a whole. Table 22 below shows that this is not the case in Executive Question Time sessions. In EQT sessions, the number of contributions made by female and male MSPs is much closer to their representation in the parliament as a whole (two percent over for male MSPs and two percent under for female MSPs).

Table 22: The number of male and female turns in EQT sessions

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
PMQT (all turns)	3	90 mins. 1.5 hours	188	124	64
Percentage of total number of turns				66%	34%
EQT: Questions Only			93	62	31
Percentage of total number of questions				66%	33%
EQT: Responses Only			95	62	33
Percentage of total number of responses				65%	35%

As shown in Table 23 this is similar to the amount that male and female MSPs contribute in all the debates¹⁶ in the corpus.

Table 23: The number of male and female turns in debates

Type of Speech Event	No of events	Duration of all events	Total Turns	Male turns	Female turns
Debates	7	510 mins. 8.5 hours	271	177	94
Percentage of total number of turns				65	35

These results show the amount that male and female MSPs occupy the legal ‘floor’ in Scottish Parliament debates and Executive Question Times is approximately the same as the proportion of male and female MSPs in the parliament. This means that neither male nor female MSPs can be said to be taking proportionally more of the speaking turns or dominating these interactions. It is only in First Minister’s Question Times that female MSPs appear to be under-represented and male MSPs over-represented. A comparison with the data from the House of Commons (Chapter Five, Tables 2-5, p.131-2) shows that the two assemblies are similar in that in all of the events apart from P/FMQT sessions male and female MPs and MSPs participate in proportion to their numbers in the parliament. This is shown in Table 24 below.

Table 24: The percentage of legal turns taken by male and female MPs in different speech events in the Scottish Parliament and the House of Commons.

Parliament	Overall % Representation of MPs		% of debate turns.		% of E/DQT turns		% of FM/PM QT Questions	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Scotland	63	37	65	35	66	34	76	24
House of Commons	82	18	82	18	75	25	93	7

Having established that in most speech events male and female MSPs gain the floor by taking legal turns in proportion to their numbers in the parliament as a whole it is now possible to undertake a detailed analysis of both legal and illegal turns in three Scottish Parliament debates.

8.3.3. Legal interventions in debates

8.3.3.1. Requesting a speaker to give way

The system of making a legal ‘give way’ intervention is exactly the same in the Scottish Parliament as in the House of Commons. The intervening MSP (IMP) stands up and holds out their arm indicating to the MSP giving the speech (CMP) that they would like to intervene. The MSP giving the speech then decides whether or not to take the intervention as shown in Figure 5 (Chapter Five, p.125) which shows the turn-taking choices available to an MP when requested to give way.

As identified in Chapter Five, give way interventions can either be oppositional to the CMP or supportive. There were only two examples of supportive give ways in the Westminster debates, and there was only one example of a supportive give way in the three Scottish Parliament debates. The fact that almost all the give way interventions were oppositional may suggest that the Scottish Parliament is not an overly consensual assembly. Table 25 below shows the numbers of give way interventions made by male and female MSPs in the three debates.

Table 25: ‘Giving way’ in three debates.

	Debate 1		Debate 2		Debate 3	
Topic	Abolition of Poindings and Warrant Seals ¹⁷ .		Transport.		Health	
Number of Interventions to ‘give way’	23		13		12	
	M 15	F 8	M 10	F 3	M 3	F 9
Of which Supportive ‘give ways’	0	0	0	0	0	1

Out of a total number of 48 legal and successful give way interventions¹⁸, female MSPs made 20. This means that female MSPs were responsible for 42% of the interventions and male MSPs 58%. This proportion is more than the representation of women in the Scottish Parliament, which stands at 37%.

However, the fact that the proportion of requests to give way by male and female MPs varied greatly in the two debates (female MSPs made 75% of the requests in debate three, 53% in debate one and only 33% in debate two) means that overall this sample of debates turns did not show any substantial difference between give way requests by male and female MSPs (in relation to their proportions in the parliament as a whole).

Similarly in the Westminster debates (See Chapter Five, Table 1, p.128), no substantial difference was found in the proportions of give way requests made by male and female MPs. As in the Scottish Parliament the proportion of male and female members requesting give ways was highly variable between debates (between 25% and 50% of the give way requests were made by female MPs). This variability may depend largely upon whether a female or male MP/MSP proposes the motion, or is the main speaker for their party in the debate. In the sample of the Scottish Parliament it is noticeable that in each debate the chief spokesperson for each party in each of the debates made most of the give way interventions on their opponents' speeches. For example, in debate one there was no female spokesperson for any of the parties (and female give way requests were low at 33%), whereas in debate three a female MSP proposed the motion, and was responsible for most of the give way interventions, which explains why the proportion of female interventions was high at 75%¹⁹. This is an interesting observation as it suggests that status is an important factor in determining how much MSPs (and possibly MPs) request others to give way. It is also possible that because speeches in the Scottish Parliament are shorter than in Westminster there are fewer opportunities for give way interventions, and therefore the party spokespeople are the only ones who are given the opportunity to intervene. The following section considers these time constraints in relation to the degree to which give way requests are refused by MSPs.

8.3.3.2. Refusing to comply with a request to give way

The analysis of give way interventions in the Westminster debates suggested that refusing to comply with a request to give way is marked behaviour because the convention is that MPs agree to give way when asked. It was found that refusals to give way were uncommon when the CMP was a backbench MP, but were

more common with higher status MPs. In the case of low-status MPs it was suggested that a refusal to give way may be detrimental because it could imply that they had something to hide or could not defend their position. Examples of high-status MPs refusing to give way were common because these MPs typically have more parliamentary business to present, and it was suggested that these refusals might be an expression of and a contribution to their construction as powerful participants in debates.

In the Scottish Parliament, refusals to give way are extremely common. This is especially true of high status MPs, as in the Westminster debates. In Debate two for example, Sarah Boyack (the Minister for Transport) refuses to give way six times in a thirteen-minute speech, and only agrees to give way once. This is evidently an extreme case, evidenced by the fact that other MSPs appeal to the Presiding Officer on a 'point of order' complaining that the Minister should take some interventions. However, it is clear that in the other opening and closing speeches in the Scottish debates, MSPs may allow one or sometimes two interventions but refuse all others. Lower status MSPs (who frequently are only allowed between five and ten minutes to speak) also refuse to give way (although they have fewer requests than high status MSPs). The fact that MSPs refuse to give way more than MPs in Westminster is directly related to the fact that the resource of the debate floor is scarcer than in Westminster because of time constraints.

These constraints on the speeches of MSPs give rise to a number of different linguistic strategies by members attempting to hold the floor by refusing to yield to a give way request. For example, some speakers attempt to account for their reasons for not giving way by saying that they have 'just started' their speech or that the intervening MSP has already had a chance to speak. By giving reasons for not giving way MSPs mitigate their refusal and make it appear less direct or rude. However, some speakers use the opposite strategy and simply respond 'No' to a request to give way. One MSP who does this is Sarah Boyack (in the speech referred to above) who uses the direct refusal 'no' three times in a row when asked to give way. This sort of direct refusal is an example of dominant behaviour in debates, as it does not attempt to be polite or address the negative

face needs of participants. Another strategy for keeping control of the floor occurs when a speaker complies with a request to give way, but having accepted the intervention goes on to ignore what the intervening MP has asked or said. Typically the CMP will account for this by saying that they are 'just coming to that', but never responds to the question or point that was raised in the intervention.

Refusals to give way are therefore much more common in Scottish Parliament debates than in Westminster debates, and this is directly related to the time constraints imposed on MSPs which do not exist in Westminster. Time constraints mean that control of the floor is at a premium which gives rise to a number of linguistic strategies to refuse give way interventions (and also to avoid taking the time to address questions raised by interventions once they have been accepted). Refusals to give way are particularly common in the speeches of high status MSPs, but unlike Westminster, low-status MSPs also frequently refuse to give way. Refusing to give way is not a gendered practice as both male and female MSPs of high and low status frequently refused to give way and this seems to be a common and accepted behaviour in debates. In the Scottish Parliament the consideration of time constraints far outweigh the consideration that it may appear 'weak' to refuse to give way (which is thought to be the case in Westminster). In the Scottish Parliament the emphasis is so strongly placed on time constraints that occasionally the Presiding Officer will intervene to refuse a give way request on behalf of an MP who is coming near to the end of their allotted speaking time. Refusing to give way is therefore a much more legitimised and accepted practice in the Scottish Parliament than in Westminster, which also suggests that a refusal is perhaps a less dominant or 'powerful' behaviour for MSPs in Scotland than MPs in Westminster.

8.3.4. Illegal interventions in debates

Illegal interventions were classified in Chapter Five according to the extent to which they disrupt the debate discourse and affect the D1 legal floor. The first type of illegal intervention identified is that of collective shows of support or disapproval. These types of interventions are common in Westminster and it was

found that the shouts of 'hear hear' and shouts of support or disapproval were most commonly made by male MPs. These shouts can disrupt the D1 legal floor by 'drowning out' the speaker and preventing them from continuing their speech, and are therefore a marker of dominant behaviour in debates. It was noted that these collective responses function like applause in that they occur in regular patterns (Atkinson 1984: 32). This type of intervention also functions in a similar way to backchannels in conversation in that it shows the speaker that the listener is aligned to them in terms of their message.

In the Scottish Parliament applause is permitted in the debating chamber. Additionally, MSPs clap their hands upon their desks, which makes a louder sound than clapping with both hands. This applause is only used as a show of support, primarily occurring at the end of an MSP's speech. There is no corresponding sound to express disapproval, although sometimes a low murmuring sound of disapproval is audible. Within the video corpus of debates and Question Times it appeared that the use of this type of illegal intervention is much less frequent than the collective interventions in the House of Commons. Unlike Westminster, the applause in the Scottish Parliament did not prevent a speaker from continuing with their speech. It is difficult to assess whether or not applause is a gendered practice in the same way that collective cheering is in the House of Commons. The video data shows one woman clapping her hands on the desk in support of a speech, so this would suggest that it might not be a gendered practice. One of the reasons that female Westminster MPs said they didn't make collective illegal interventions is that it is possible to recognise the voice of the person who is shouting. Applause is anonymous and at the same time a common practice in many non-parliamentary contexts, which may mean that female MSPs find it easier to produce than the 'boyish' shouts (Chapter Five, 5.5.2.1., p.135) made by MPs in the House of Commons.

Apart from these collective illegal interventions the forms of individual illegal interventions were the same in the Scottish Parliament as in Westminster. In the three debates in the data corpus of the Scottish Parliament there were a total of 23 illegal interventions and 48 legal give way interventions. This means that the proportion of illegal interventions to legal interventions is lower in the Scottish

Parliament compared with the House of Commons: 48% of all interventions were illegal in the Scottish Parliament compared with 62% of illegal interventions in the Westminster sample of debates²⁰.

Table 26 below shows the numbers of illegal interventions made by male and female MPs in each Scottish Parliament debate.

Table 26: Individual illegal interventions in three debates.

Topic	Debate 1		Debate 2		Debate 3	
	Abolition of Poundings and Warrant Seals		Transport		Health	
Number of illegal interventions by MPs	9		4		10	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
	8	1	2	2	1	9

This table shows that female MSPs made 12 out of the 23 illegal interventions, and male MSPs made 11 illegal interventions. This means that female MSPs produced just over half (52%) of all the illegal interventions in the three debates, compared with only 10% of illegal interventions made by female MSPs in the Westminster debates. Male and female MSPs produced a combination of three part interventions (where the intervention gains a response from the CMP and therefore impinges upon the D1 legal floor), and two-part exchanges (which do not gain a response).

As with the 'give way' interventions there is a great deal of variability in the numbers of illegal interventions between the three debates. In the first debate male MSPs account for nearly all the illegal interventions, whereas female MSPs account for the vast majority of illegal interventions in the third debate. This is partly explained by the fact that seven of the eight male interventions in debate one were made by the same MSP, and eight of the nine female illegal interventions in debate three were made by the same woman. The 23 illegal interventions were produced by just nine MSPs (four women and five men).

Transcript 33 below shows a series of illegal interventions made by the female MSP who was responsible for eight of the illegal interventions in debate three.

Transcript 33: Sustained illegal interventions (14/12/00 Video extract 15)

Key

DE = Dorothy Grace-Elder (SNP). RS = Richard Simpson (Lab).

DPO = Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson). AN Alexander Neil (SNP)

1MP = the voice of one MSP MPs = the voices of a number of MSPs

Underline = particular emphasis on word or syllable

(.) = micropause of under a second (1) = timed pause in seconds

[] = overlapping utterances, or the noises made by a group of MSPs

(laughter) = noises made by the CMP

(2 minutes of Dorothy Grace-Elder's Speech precedes the start of the transcript)

11RS: (Point of Order) um the th th last speaker was quite rightly interrupted

2 by the Presiding officer (.) for failing to address the motion (.) could I

3 request er with due respect Deputy Presiding Officer (.) that you ask

4 Dorothy Grace-Elder to to return to the terms of the SNP motion (.)

5DE: I am addressing the motion (.) I started off by making it very clear (.)

DPO: [order] [order]

6DE: very very clear (1) that the motion refers to policies not

DPO: [order] [order order] [I] [Ms Elder]

7 pardon me Deputy Presiding Officer

8DPO: I still have to respond to Doctor

9 Simpson's point of order (.)

10DE: thank you

11DPO: Doctor Simpson you are absolutely right Ms Elder has already been

12 advised that she should stick to the terms of the motion and I would be

13 grateful if she would do that now please (.) Ms Elder continue

14DE: thank you

15 (.) I refer to not adequately addressing issues and the greatest issue of

16 all in health is surely telling the truth (.) and that is the issue I am trying

17 to address about policies overall (.) because it has now been revealed

18 that in the eighties and suspected back into the seventies (.) that non-A
19 and and non-B Hepatitis existed (.)
20 RS: point of order (.) point of order
21DE: now (.)
22RS: point of order
23DE: oh come on
24DPO: we have a point of order from Doctor Simpson
25RS: she is continuing to address the issue of haemophilia (.) if we were
26 going to have a debate on haemophilia (.) then we must all be allowed
27 to participate in it (.) and not listen to the lies that Dorothy Grace-Elder
28 is putting forward (.)
29DE: I beg your pardon (.)
30RS: could she be stopped
31DE: point of order (.) point of order (.)
32 DPO: can I deal with one point of order before I move on to the other (.)
33 please (.) thank you (.) Dr Simpson's substantive point is correct Ms
34 Elder I'd be grateful if you would stick to the motion as you have been
35 asked twice already (.) however I would ask him to withdraw his last
36 remark
37RS: gross distortions rather than lies
38DPO: thank you
39DE: I think you should
40 withdraw that more accurately
41DPO: order (.) order (.) order
42AN: point of order Presiding Officer
43DPO: order (.) Mister Neil
44 point of order the motion states the motion states that under debate
(reads motion)
45 haemophilia is a legitimate issue within the terms of this motion (2)
46DPO: Mister Neil (.) thank you for reading the motion out I do have the
47 motion in front of me (.) I would ask Ms Elder to stick very strictly (.)
48 to the terms of that motion which I am sure she has also read (.) please
49 proceed (Dorothy Grace-Elder's Speech continues)

Transcript 33 starts with a point of order intervention in Dorothy Grace-Elder's Speech in which Richard Simpson complains that Elder is talking about haemophilia, which does not relate to the motion (lines 1-4). The Deputy Presiding Officer (DPO) is about to respond to this point of order when she is interrupted by an illegal intervention by Elder (lines 5-7) in which the MSP competes with the DPO for the floor. Elder apologises for this intervention but continues to speak about haemophilia, and makes another illegal intervention 'oh come on!' (line 23) when Simpson asks for another point of order. Simpson accuses Elder of lying (line 27), and she has a point of order and asks for him to withdraw the statement (line 31). Elder's third illegal intervention occurs on line 39-40 when she says that Simpson should withdraw his statement more accurately.

This extract shows that the 'legal' D1 floor completely breaks down primarily through the illegal interventions by this female MSP. Although Richard Simpson also breaks the debate rules by calling Elder a 'liar', it is Elder who disrupts the debate most. Her illegal interventions, her interruption of the DPO, and her persistence in continuing to talk about haemophilia when she has been told not to are all examples of rule-breaking and of extremely dominant or powerful behaviour in debates.

Regardless of the variability in the number of illegal interventions made by male and female MPs in the three debates, there was no evidence that female MPs in Westminster would challenge the Speaker's authority or intervene in this way. The data suggests that female MSPs make the same number of illegal interventions as male MSPs, and that female and male MSPs can show powerful or dominant behaviour in debates through rule-breaking activities. In the Westminster parliament this behaviour was almost exclusively shown by male MPs. The difference in rule-breaking between men and women in the two parliaments suggests that male speakers are more dominant than female Speakers in House of Commons debates, whereas in the Scottish Parliament male and female MSPs are just as likely to be dominant or powerful speakers.

8.3.5. The Presiding Officer's interventions in debates

The Presiding Officer's role in regulating the order of turns in debates is evaluated in this section. The Presiding Officer (PO) in the Scottish Parliament serves the same function as the Speaker in the House of Commons: the Presiding Officer is responsible for ensuring that the debate rules are followed and that all MSPs have a fair opportunity to contribute to the debate. The minor differences between the two roles (as mentioned in section 8.2.3. above) include the fact that the PO is electronically notified when an MSP wishes to speak in a debate; that the PO must ensure that a speech or debate occurs within the an allotted time; and that the PO stays seated throughout the debate, and does not have to stand up to intervene as the Speaker does in the House of Commons.

In the House of Commons, the Speaker intervened between one and four times in each of the five debates (see Chapter Five, Table 7, p.145), even though there were between four and twenty-one illegal interventions in each of the debates. Furthermore, only two of these interventions were made in order to stop an MP from speaking out of turn. Therefore illegal contributions were mostly tolerated by the Speaker in House of Commons debates. Table 27 below shows the number of interventions made by the PO in the three Scottish Parliament debates compared with the number of illegal interventions made by MSPs.

Table 27: The number of interventions made by the PO and the number of illegal interventions made by MSPs in three debates.

	Debate 1		Debate 2		Debate 3	
Topic	Abolition of Poindings and Warrant Seals		Transport		Health	
Presiding Officer	Female Deputy.		Male Presiding Officer.		Male Deputy/ Female Deputy.	
Number of interventions by the Presiding Officer.	15		8		21	
Number of Illegal interventions By MSPs.	9		4		10	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
	8	1	2	2	1	9

The number of interventions made by the PO and Deputy Presiding Officers (DPOs) in these debates is far higher than the number made by the Speakers and Deputy Speakers in the extract of debates from the House of Commons: the PO and DPOs made 44 interventions and the Speakers and Deputy Speakers 13 interventions in a comparable amount of time. This is surprising given that there was a smaller proportion of illegal interventions to legal ones in the Scottish Parliament than in the House of Commons (48% and 62% of illegal interventions respectively) which suggests that a moderator would have less reason to intervene. Table 28 below shows the function of all the interventions made by the Speakers (see also Chapter Five, Table 8, p.145) and Presiding Officers.

Table 28: The number and functions of the Speakers' and Presiding Officers' interventions in all debates.

Function of Speakers'/presiding Officers' intervention	No. of interventions House of Commons	No. of interventions Scottish Parliament
To tell MPs to keep to the topic of debate	3	6
To tell MPs not to speak out of turn	2	3
To ask for clarification (e.g. Is an MP giving way or not?)	2	0
To correct the language used by MPs	4	1
To announce something	1	11
Error by Speaker	1	1
To impose time restrictions	0	11
To explain procedures	0	3
To tell public gallery to be quiet	0	1
To answer points of order	0	6
To tell MPs not to seek interventions	0	1
Total interventions	13	44

Table 28 shows the differences in the number and functions of the moderators' interventions between each parliament. As in the House of Commons, only a few interventions (three) were made by the PO to tell MPs not to speak out of turn. One of these interventions is shown in line 7 of Transcript 33 (p.254 above) in which the DPO shouts 'order' at Dorothy Grace-Elder who competes with her for the turn. The second intervention is made by the DPO shouting 'order!' when Tommy Sheridan laughs and shouts as a Conservative MSP (John Scott) claims that the privatisation of the railways has been successful. The third intervention is

made in debate one when the DPO tells a group of MSPs not to speak to each other across the benches.

The most noticeable feature of this table (apart from the fact that many more interventions were made in the Scottish Parliament than in the House of Commons) is that the interventions in the Scottish Parliament perform a wider range of functions than the Westminster interventions. Eleven interventions were made to impose time restrictions in debates which is clearly related to the procedural difference between the two assemblies (whereby the House of Commons has no time restrictions and the Scottish Parliament restricts the length of speeches and debates).

The PO explained procedures (about voting and the timing of speeches) to the MSPs three times, whereas no explanations were given to the MPs in the House of Commons. This is possibly related to the fact that the Scottish Parliament is a newer assembly and so there is more need to explain the procedures. So although the POs in the Scottish Parliament intervene much more than the Speakers in the House of Commons, these interventions are only related to floor apportionment in order to impose time restrictions, not to regulate illegal interventions.

8.4. The Use of Adversarial Linguistic Features in Scottish Parliament Question Times

8.4.1. Introduction

In this section the use of adversarial linguistic features (identified in Chapter Six) by male and female MSPs in Question Times in the Scottish Parliament is assessed. Chapter Six found that in the House of Commons half of all the questions in the data corpus were adversarial (they contained adversarial linguistic features) and half were not. Although male and female MPs asked the same amount of questions in proportion to their representation in parliament, male MPs asked more adversarial questions than female MPs. The amount of adversarial questions asked by MPs varied not only according to the gender of

MPs, but also according to their political party (whether they belong to an opposition or government party) and to an MP's status within parliament (higher status MPs asked more adversarial questions than lower status MPs).

The aims of this section are firstly to discover whether the Scottish Parliament is as adversarial as the Westminster assembly by analysing the use of adversarial linguistic features in Question Times; and secondly to establish whether the use of these adversarial linguistic features varies according to the gender of MSPs (as well as their parliamentary status and party membership). A small video corpus provides the data for this analysis, which comprises six Question Time sessions, three of which are First Minister's Questions and three Executive Question Times²¹. Section 8.4.2. below assesses the number of questions asked by male and female MSPs in these question time sessions, then section 8.4.3. assesses the number of adversarial and non-adversarial questions and responses asked by male and female MSPs.

8.4.2. The number of questions asked by male and female MSPs.

As discussed in Chapter Six, Question Time sessions, and in particular PMQT sessions are likely to be more adversarial than debates because they allow MPs/MSPs an opportunity to scrutinise government legislation and directly question the Prime Minister and government Ministers about their policies and actions. The detailed analysis of PMQT exchanges in Chapter Six established that these sessions were indeed extremely adversarial, and linguistic features that contributed to the adversarial content of speaking turns were identified. The speech events of Executive Question Times (EQTs) and First Minister's Question Times (FMQTS) in the Scottish Parliament perform the same function and follow the same format as House of Commons DQT sessions and PMQT sessions, and for this reason the same analysis can be undertaken in both parliaments.

The first way in which the linguistic behaviour of MSPs may differ with respect to these adversarial speech events is the frequency with which they produce questions. Table 29 below shows the EQT and FMQT questions asked by male and female MSPs according to their parliamentary status²² and party membership.

Table 29: The number of Scottish Parliament questions asked by male and female MSPs according to party membership and parliamentary status.

Male/female	Male			Female		
Party	Status			Status		
	Low	High	Total	Low	High	Total
Labour	19	0	19	19	0	19
SNP	14	17	31	11	6	17
Conservative	10	9	19	0	3	3
LibDem	0	14	14	0	1	1
other	0	7	7	0	0	0
Total	43	47	90	30	10	40

As already noted in section 8.3.2., 35% of all the questions were asked by female MSPs, and about 65% by male MSPs, which is close to the representation of male and female MSPs in the Parliament (63% and 37% respectively). Exactly half of the questions asked by Labour MSPs were asked by men, and half by women. This means that male and female Labour MSPs also produced questions in proportion to their representation in parliament (49% male MSPs and 51% female MSPs). In the SNP 65% of questions were asked by male MSPs and 35% by female MSPs, which means that male MSPs were slightly over-represented and female MPs slightly underrepresented in relation to their proportions in the party (male MSPs represent 57% and female MSPs 43% of the SNP seats). In the Liberal Democrat party only 6% of the questions were asked by female MSPs although they represent 24% of the Liberal Democrat seats, and in the Conservative Party women only asked 14% of the questions (men asked 86%) but this was almost in proportion to their representation in the Conservative Party as they only occupy 16% of the seats.

As in the House of Commons, the main opposition party (the SNP) asked most of the questions (35%), which is both more than their representation in the parliament as a whole (27%), and more than the number of questions that Labour party MSPs asked (27%), even though the Labour Party's representation in the

parliament is greater (43%). The Conservative Party also asked a higher percentage of questions (22%) than their representation in parliament (15%). This shows that, just as in Westminster, the opposition parties ask more questions than the government parties, because it is their function to scrutinise and oppose government policies. The amount of high and low status male and female MSPs asking questions was about equal in every party except the Labour party. As found in the House of Commons, no questions were asked by high status male or female Labour MSPs, presumably because they are already familiar with (and do not want to oppose) government legislation.

As the tables in 8.3.2. show, men ask more questions than women in FMQT and PMQT sessions than they do in DQT or EQT sessions. As suggested in Chapter five, this can partly be explained by the fact that in FMQT and PMQT sessions the leaders of each political party are guaranteed speaking turns. In both assemblies all the political leaders are male²³, so this factor in itself partly explains the differences in the frequency of participation of male and female MSPs in the different events.

Having given an account of the number of questions asked by MSPs according to gender, parliamentary status and political party, it is now possible to identify the frequency with which male and female MSPs ask adversarial questions.

8.4.3. Adversarial Questions and responses in Scottish Parliament Question Time sessions.

In order to identify whether the questions asked by MSPs were adversarial or not, the use of the adversarial features identified in Chapter Six was noted for each question (See Chapter Six, section 6.3., p.164). As in Chapter Six, the presence or absence of seven adversarial features allowed the questions to be classified as adversarial or non-adversarial. Table 30 below shows the number of adversarial questions asked by male and female MSPs in both FMQT and EQT sessions.

Table 30: Adversarial questions in all Question Time Sessions

Male/female	Male			Female		
Party	Status			Status		
	Low	High	Total	Low	High	Total
Labour	5	0	5	0	0	0
SNP	1	4	5	0	1	1
Conservative	0	3	3	0	0	0
LibDem	0	1	1	0	0	0
other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	14	0	1	1

Table 30 shows that out of a total of 130 questions in all Question Time Sessions, only 15 (12%) contained adversarial linguistic features. This is an extremely low number of adversarial questions in comparison to the 50% of adversarial questions in the House of Commons corpus, and it suggests that the Scottish Parliament is a less adversarial forum than the House of Commons. However, as in the House of Commons, the majority of the questions are asked by high status male MSPs/MPs, and female MSPs/MPs produce very few adversarial questions (nine in the House of Commons and one in the Scottish Parliament).

The distribution of adversarial questions in EQT and FMQT sessions was almost equal. There were eight adversarial questions in the EQT sessions and seven in the FMQT sessions. In the House of Commons PMQT sessions 57% of the questions were adversarial, and in DQT sessions 43% were adversarial. So the Scottish Parliament differs from Westminster not only in the amount of adversarial questions asked, but also in the relative distribution of those questions between the different types of Question Time sessions.

In the FMQT sessions five of the seven adversarial questions were produced by David McLetchie (the Conservative leader) and John Swinney (the SNP leader) in their ‘guaranteed’ speaking turns. In these cases, being adversarial may well be part of what is expected of the opposition party leaders in this forum. One of these adversarial exchanges is shown below in Transcript 34.

Transcript 34: An example of an adversarial question in FMQT (14/12/00 Video extract 16)

JS = John Swinney (SNP Party Leader) FM = First Minister

- 1JS: thank you Presiding Officer (.) can I ask the First Minister what issues
2 were last discussed at the recent meeting of the Scottish Cabinet (1)
- 3FM: Sir David the cabinet discussed several several matters of significance
4 to the Executive and to the people of Scotland (1)
- 5JS I'm grateful to the First Minister for that answer I wonder if the
6 Cabinet discussed the fact that this is the (.) last Question Time before
7 Christmas and er (.) in the spirit of Christmas I wondered if the (.) First
8 Minister would give er a straight answer to a straight question (1)
- MSPs: [laughter]
9 if the (.) if the er (1) okay okay I'll make it I'll I'll make it nice and
MSPs: [talking]
10 easy (.) if the First Minister was to do a sum and he was to add twelve
11 and twenty-four together (.) what answer would he get (5)
- MSPs: [laughter]
12FM: Sir David (.) Sir David (.) let me say that er we should treat this
13 Question Time with a bit of respect and I expect a bit more of
14 John Swinney (5)
- MSPs: [shouting/banging]
15JS: well I I'm deadly serious on this point er First Minister because twelve
16 and twenty-four is of course (.) thirty-six (.) now oh yes
17MPS [cheering/applause]
18JS you like that (1) I'm glad that I can count when the First Minister
19 can't eh (.) er now in the health press release this morning from the
20 Health Minister (.) it stated that by two thousand and two (.) the
21 maximum time an individual would have to wait for the investigation
22 of a heart problem would be twelve weeks (.) and a maximum of
23 twenty-four weeks to undertake heart by-pass surgery (.) twelve weeks
24 plus twenty four weeks equals thirty-six weeks which in my book
25 equals nine months (.) on the eighteenth of March nineteen ninety

26 seven (.) Malcolm Chisholm (.) then Labour's health spokesman (.)
 27 now Labour's deputy health Minister said in a Labour Party press
 28 release which I have in front of me (.) it is scandalous
 1MP: [unclear intervention]
 29JS oh I think you should wait Mister Galbraith (.) it is scandalous
 MSPs [shouting]
 30 that many needing urgent heart by-pass surgery (.) have to
 31 wait nine months (.) now isn't it the case (.) that yesterday's Tory
 1MP [shouts]
 32 scandal that Malcolm Chisholm was talking about (.) is now today's
 33 new Labour target (.) isn't that the real scandal of Labour's handling of
 34 the Health service (6)
 MSPs [applause]
 35FM: well Sir David we hope in this Question Time the best is still to come
 36 (.) another example (.) another example of the SNP failing to realise
 1MSP: [shouts]
 37 that this is an important day for the health service in Scotland (.) but
 38 not because of the long long (.)
 1MSP perhaps you're a failure
 39 winge that we get from the SNP (.) let's repeat that Susan Deacon
 40 today announced significant reductions in waiting times
 (turn continues)

In some ways this exchange appears similar to questions and answers in the House of Commons. For example, John Swinney uses conducive question forms as in line 31 'isn't it the case that...', he uses the aggravated description of the 'scandal' of waiting lists (line 33), and insinuates that the First Minister is not to be trusted (he asks for a 'straight answer' on line 8). However, this is the most adversarial series of questions in the corpus of Scottish Parliament Question Times, and it is much less adversarial than Hague and Blair's exchanges transcribed in Chapter Six. In fact the highest adversarial 'score' of five was given for the four questions in John Swinney's turn (partially represented in the transcript above), and most of the other adversarial questions had only one or two adversarial features²⁴. In the House of Commons a number of questions had a

score of between five and fourteen (see Chapter Six, Table 15, p.197). The number of adversarial questions in the Scottish Parliament is a fraction of the number in Westminster, but the number of adversarial linguistic features in these questions is much lower in the Scottish Parliament than in the House of Commons.

Apart from the seven adversarial linguistic features mentioned above, Chapter Six identified the form of questions as being another factor which can contribute to an exchange being adversarial. Conducive questions (which constrain the possible responses of the person replying) were identified as being characteristic of and contributing to an adversarial style in question time sessions. In the House of Commons Questions Times 80% of questions took a conducive form. Table 31 shows the form of questions asked in FMQT and EQT sessions in the Scottish Parliament.

Table 31: The form of FMQT and EQT questions

	Labour		SNP		Cons.		LibDems		Other	
Male/female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Question form:										
1) conducive + <i>will</i>	10	7	10	5	9	1	6	1	2	
2) conducive + <i>do</i>	2	6	2	4	4	1	5		1	
3) conducive + <i>isn't it...</i>	1		4		1					
4) Other conducive	1	4	8	3	2		2		2	
5) WH-type	3	3	7	3	3	1	1		2	
6) Other non-conductive	1			1						
7) No Question	1			1						
Total	19	19	31	17	19	3	14	1	7	0

One of the main differences between the two parliaments was that in two instances no question was asked in a questioning turn. In these cases the MSP taking the questioning turn took the opportunity to express their opinion by making a number of statements. The Minister had to respond to the statements

without a question having been formed. On three other occasions the Presiding Officer intervened to insist that an MSP formed a question, but on the two occasions represented in the table above the Presiding Officer had presumably not noticed or did not have enough time to intervene. The fact that MSPs can break the rules and take questioning turns without forming a question may show that the enforcement of the rules is not as strict in the Scottish Parliament as in the House of Commons, where there were no examples of this type of questioning turn²⁵. In the House of Commons Question Times female MSPs used fewer different types of conducive forms than male MPs. All conducive questions produced by female MPs took the most common 'will' form (only 41% of the male conducive questions took this form). This is not the case in the Scottish Parliament as the 'will' conducive form accounted for 56% of female questions and 41% of male questions, and male and female questions were equally variable between the different conducive forms.

As suggested in Chapter Six, the data presented in Table 31 indicates that there is not a relationship between the conducive form of a question and the content of a question being adversarial (and non-conductive forms being non-adversarial). Conducive forms accounted for 80% of all the questions in both parliaments, even though there were much fewer adversarial questions in the Scottish Parliament. This suggests that although conducive questions can be used effectively in order to be adversarial, they are probably used in Question Time sessions as conventional and standard formulae upon which to base the content of a questioning turn.

Apart from the number and form of adversarial and non-adversarial questions, the responses given to questions can also be adversarial or non-adversarial. The First Minister gave eight adversarial responses and 28 non-adversarial responses in FMQT sessions²⁶, and seven of these eight adversarial responses were produced in response to an adversarial question. The responses given by senior and junior, male and female Ministers in EQT sessions is shown in Table 32 below. This table shows that 35% of all responses were given by female Ministers and 65% by male Ministers, which is close to the proportion of male and female members in the Scottish Parliament. Male and female Ministers produced the same amount

of adversarial responses (two adversarial responses each). Although eight adversarial questions were asked, Ministers only replied with adversarial responses four times. The number of adversarial responses is so small that it is not possible to establish whether there is variability in the production of adversarial responses between male and female, and junior and senior ministers.

Table 32: Senior and junior Ministers' responses to Questions in EQT sessions.

Male/female	Male			Female		
Adversarial/ Non-adv.	adversarial	Non- adversarial	Total	adversarial	Non- adversarial	Total
Status: Senior	1	22	23	2	21	23
Status: Junior	1	38	39	0	10	10
Total	2	60	62	2	31	33

This section has shown that as in the House of Commons, female and male MSPs ask questions and give responses in proportion to their representation in the parliaments as a whole. In both parliaments members from the main opposition parties ask most of the questions. Far fewer adversarial questions and responses are produced in the Scottish Parliament compared with the House of Commons, which suggests that this may be a much less adversarial forum than the House of Commons. Evidence for this is also provided by the adversarial 'scores' of individual questions, which are much lower in the Scottish Parliament than in the House of Commons.

In the House of Commons female MSPs were responsible for asking 9% of the adversarial questions (when their proportion of seats is 18%), and in the Scottish Parliament they asked 7% of the adversarial questions (when their proportion of seats is 37%). Whilst the number of adversarial questions in the Scottish Parliament is small (women asked one out of fourteen adversarial questions), and as noted above the party leaders (who ask the majority of adversarial questions and have the most adversarial roles) are all men, these results may nevertheless

indicate that women are under-represented (in both parliaments) when it comes to producing adversarial questions.

8.5. Humour and Irony in Scottish Parliament Speech Events

This section analyses the use of a non-serious ‘key’ in Scottish Parliament debates and question times and compares the use of humour by male and female MSPs with the analysis of humour in the House of Commons undertaken in Chapter Seven. The entire twelve-hour data-corpus of debates and question times from the Scottish Parliament is used for this analysis.

An initial examination of the Scottish Parliament revealed that there are no examples of filibustering in the data corpus. It is impossible to undertake this type of rule-breaking activity in the Scottish Parliament because of the rules about the time restrictions on speeches. No other strategies to do with breaking these timing rules were found in the data corpus, and all MSPs appeared to comply with the rules or with the Presiding Officer’s instructions regarding the timing of speeches.

There were many instances of humorous talk in the corpus of data from the Scottish Parliament. As in the House of Commons, many humorous exchanges had an adversarial function. This is shown in Transcript 35 below.

Transcript 35: Executive Question time session (07/12/00 Video extract 17)

BM = Brian Monteith (Conservative), JM = Jack McConnell (Labour)

PO = Presiding Officer

- 1JM: (end of response to EQT question) and that’s why the intake to the
2 Teacher education institutions was increased (.) er and that’s why
3 we’re currently looking at a recruitment campaign (.) er which would
4 follow on from the McLoan McLoan negotiations (.)
5PO: did I hear a telephone going there (.) I hope not (.) Mister Monteith (2)

MSPs [talking/laughter]

6BM: maybe it was Jack McConnell phoning a friend um (4)

MSPs/PO: [laughter]

7BM: I er I thank er I thank the er Presiding Officer (.) I thank the Presiding
8 Officer (.) and I thank er the Minister's er comments in answer to er
9 Bruce Crawford (.) er he did answer in regard to what he's doing (.) er
10 with primary and secondary school teachers to encourage them to enter
11 er does he have any plans or any view on (.) er encouragement for
12 specific subjects such as Maths or English teaching (1)

13JM: I think there are different issues in different subject areas (1 minute of
14 turn) and I'll do that before Christmas if at all possible (.)

15DPO [unclear]

16 and I hope next time Brian is able to ask the audience before he asks a
17 question

18MPs [laughter]

In this example, Brian Monteith exploits the Presiding Officer's intervention about the telephone (line 5) for comic effect. He says that the telephone was Jack McConnell (the Minister answering his question) 'phoning a friend'²⁷, meaning that he needed help in order to reply to the question. Then Jack McConnell alludes to Brian Monteith's joke in order to retaliate. On line 16 he says that Brian Monteith should 'ask the audience'²⁸ before he asks his next question. This implies that Monteith needs help to construct a question.

As in the House of Commons, humour often occurred at the beginning of an MSP's turn, suggesting that it served interactional functions concerned with buying time for the speaker. Other functions of humour identified in Chapter Seven such as keeping the audience's attention seem to be the same in both parliaments. Another similarity with the House of Commons is that humour in the Scottish Parliament stretched over a number of turns as in Transcript 35 above and Transcript 36 below:

Transcript 36: Health Debate (14/12/00 Video extract 18)

NS = Nicola Sturgeon (SNP), DPO = Deputy Presiding Officer, FMc = Frank McAveety (Lab), SD = Susan Deacon (Lab), AN = Alex Neil (SNP)

- 1FMc: Deputy Presiding Officer (.) I was entertained earlier on (.) in the
2 debate when I heard what I thought were rehearsals for the Scottish
3 panto season (.) I overheard cries from across the chamber of ‘oh yes it
4 is oh no it’s not’ (.) well actually I thought that was a discussion
5 between Nicola Sturgeon and Kay Ullrich when they were looking at is
6 it waiting times or is it waiting lists (.) one would say oh yes it is and
7 other was saying oh no it is not (.) but the piece de resistance in my
8 opinion was the Widow Twanky performance of Dorothy Grace-Elder
9 which in a sense focussed on the accurate issue er staged there in terms
10 of (.) discussion (turn continues for 1 minute)
- 11NS (Give Way) I was going to say it’s nice to see Buttons performing from
12 the back benches but can I ask Frank MacAveety to clarify an issue
(turn continues 30 seconds)
- 13FMc: the only reference to buttons is probably the contribution the SNP
14 would make in financial terms to (.) the Scottish Health service (debate
1MP [laughter]
continues for 20 minutes)
- 15AN: (Point of Order) Presiding Officer it has just gone twelve and the
16 Cinderella Minister has actually arrived
17 (.) can you on behalf of the House make it clear to her (.) the
18 contemptuous er the contemptuous way in which she has treated this
19 House this morning is totally unacceptable
- 20DPO: not a point of order Mr Neil (makes announcement)

Here the pantomime joke started by Frank McAveety on line 2 is continued over twenty minutes of the debate. After McAveety refers to Dorothy Grace-Elder as ‘the Widow Twankey’ (line 8), Nicola Sturgeon refers to McAveety as another pantomime character, ‘Buttons’ (line 11). This reference is developed further when McAveety uses the sense of buttons to mean ‘not very much money’ (line

13) in relation to the SNP party's financial contribution to the Health Service. Finally, some twenty minutes later Alex Neil uses the joke in his point of order by referring to Susan Deacon as Cinderella (line 16) to complain about her late arrival in the chamber.

This example also shows that female MSPs (in this case Nicola Sturgeon) join in this type of shared, allusive humour which occurs over fairly long stretches of debate turns. Whilst male MPs produced most of the examples of humorous talk in the corpus, the production of humorous talk by female MSPs was much more frequent in the Scottish Parliament²⁹ than in the House of Commons (where only one joke was produced by a woman). There is also an example of female MSPs producing humour collaboratively; this is shown in Transcript 37 below.

Transcript 37: Poindings and Warrant Sales Debate (06/12/00 Video extract 19)

DGE = Dorothy Grace-Elder (SNP), CG = Christine Graham (SNP)

- 1DGE: the catty references to Mister Sheridan (.) not attending this or that (.)
2 nonsense (.) he worked very hard on it and also (.) the ludicrous
3 reference (.) to my colleague (.) Christine Graham and Mr Sheridan
4 flouncing out of a meeting (.) Mr Sheridan and Miss Graham have
5 never flounced in their lives (.) Presiding Officer (2)
6CG: certainly not together
MSPs: [laughter]
7DGE: (Laughs) well we'll hear about that later perhaps Christine (.)
8MSPs: [laughter]
9DGE: but my colleagues were showing quite righteous indignation over this
10 (.) we are (.) a parliament which is not a parliament of the posh (turn continues).

Here Dorothy Grace-Elder defends Tommy Sheridan and Christine Graham by saying that they did not flounce out of a meeting (line 4). This is turned into a joke by the illegal intervention of Christine Graham who says that she and Tommy Sheridan had certainly never flounced 'together' (line 6). This joke

(which rests on the sexual connotations of what Christine Graham and Tommy Sheridan did or did not do ‘together’) is then acknowledged and responded to by Dorothy Grace-Elder. In saying ‘we’ll hear about that later Christine’ she jokes that whatever Christine Graham and Tommy Sheridan were doing concerns sex, and is therefore not suitable for discussion in public. This joke is received well by the assembly and many MSPs respond with laughter.

As well as providing an example of humorous talk produced collaboratively between female MSPs, this example is also interesting because it is the only joke in the data from both parliaments which is about sex, and that is produced by women and has a man as the subject. Unlike the House of Commons, there were no examples of sexist jokes or sexual jokes directed at women in the data for the Scottish Parliament. Both the fact that women can joke about men in this way, and the fact that sexist humour does not occur in the Scottish Parliament data suggests that women MSPs behave linguistically with as wide a repertoire as men, and that the environment of the assembly is conducive to the full participation of women MSPs.

This is also shown in Transcript 38 below where a female MSP makes a joke and tries to avoid asking a question according to the accepted procedures.

Transcript 38: First Minister’s Question Time (07/12/00 Video extract 20)

MM = Margo MacDonald (SNP), PO = Presiding Officer, FM = First Minister (Henry MacLeish)

- 1MM: thank you Presiding Officer (1) if we could return to earth and leave
2 Mars behind (.) I wonder if the First Minister recalls with me that
3 following the winter crisis (.) in the NHS
4PO: [no I’m sorry] you haven’t asked (.) order
5MM: oh I know (.) he knows what my first question was though I think
6PO: no no order you must read out your first question
7MM: oh (.) right we’ll go through the form (laughs) to ask the First Minister
MSPs: [laughter]

8 how he plans to (1) recruit the required number of nurses for hospitals
 9 to cope with seasonal admissions this winter (1)
 10FM: er Margo (.) I'm really sorry that the procedures of the House force me
 11 to answer your first question and then we can get onto the real
 12 business after that (turn continues)

In this example Margo MacDonald starts her turn by making a joke (if we can return from Mars...on line 1). Then she starts to ask the First Minister a Question but does not follow the correct procedures³⁰ (lines 2-3). The Presiding Officer says she must read her question first (line 4) to which she replies that it is not necessary because the First Minister knows what her question is (line 5). The Presiding Officer insists she must read the question correctly (line 6) and she does so (lines 7-9). When the First Minister responds to the question he apologises to the female MSP (using her first name only) for having to follow the procedures (lines 10-12).

This example illustrates a number of points in relation to the differences between the Westminster and Scottish parliaments. Not only is it an example of a female MSP making a joke (which is rare in Westminster), but it also shows a female MSP challenging the fundamental procedures of the chamber. Margo MacDonald is right in saying the First Minister knows her question already, he does. So her attempt to by-pass reading out the question is actually drawing attention to what she probably regards as an unnecessary procedure. This means she is challenging the accepted and official norms. The fact that the First Minister apologises for having to adhere to the rules suggests that the female MSPs position is given some sympathy within the chamber. The data from the House of Commons suggests that this type of challenge is unlikely to be undertaken by a female MP (although some male MPs challenge debate rules when filibustering). Furthermore, this exchange also shows the lack of formality in the Scottish Parliament when compared with Westminster as first names are used, and the Presiding Officer even apologises for having to enforce the rules (line 4). The manner in which the Presiding Officer enforces the rules is often humorous which adds to the informality of the chamber in comparison to Westminster.

The analysis of humour in the corpus of Scottish Question Time debates shows that although the functions of humorous talk are similar in both assemblies, the participation of female MSPs is much more common in the Scottish Parliament than in Westminster. Humour cannot therefore be viewed as a gendered linguistic practice in the Scottish Parliament, because both male and female MPs participate in humorous exchanges. There was no evidence of other gendered linguistic practices as filibustering is not possible, and there was only one example of a joke about sex and that was made by women about a man.

8.6. Conclusions

The aim of this comparative study was to try to establish whether the findings about the linguistic behaviour of male and female politicians in the House of Commons (in Chapters Five, Six and Seven) were particular to that chamber, or whether they are typical of other political assemblies. Although this study is limited as it only compares two assemblies, the data from the Scottish Parliament showed some clear differences and similarities with the Westminster parliament. The results of this chapter are presented below and explanations of these results are discussed more fully in Chapter Nine.

In common with Westminster, male and female MPs participated in debates in proportion to their representation in the parliaments as a whole. Similarly, legal interventions in both assemblies were also made in proportion to male and female representation as a whole. This shows that women and men in both assemblies can gain access to the debate 'floor' and contribute to debates. The only exception to this was that in both parliaments women were under-represented in Prime Minister's and First Minister's Question Time sessions.

The main difference between the two assemblies with respect to floor apportionment was that female MPs produced a far higher proportion of illegal interventions in the Scottish Parliament than in the House of Commons. The production of illegal interventions was taken as a marker of dominant behaviour in debates and the fact that women did not produce these interventions in

Westminster suggested that their linguistic repertoire was not as interactionally advantageous as that of the male MPs. In the Scottish Parliament no such distinction exists as both male and female MSPs produce illegal interventions.

In Question Times a substantial difference was found between the proportion of adversarial to non-adversarial responses in the two assemblies. In Westminster, half of all the questions were adversarial whereas in the Scottish Parliament only 12% of all the questions were adversarial. However, in both assemblies male MPs/MSPs produced nearly all of the adversarial responses, and female MPs/MSPs very few. Whilst female MPs only used one form for their questions in the House of Commons, a whole range of question forms were used by female MSPs in the Scottish Parliament. Male MPs/MSPs used the whole range of question forms in both assemblies. Finally, in the House of Commons humour, sexist jokes and filibustering were identified as gendered linguistic practices. However, in the Scottish Parliament humour was frequently produced by female as well as male MSPs and no sexist jokes were made.

The differences between the two assemblies show that women MSPs participate in more linguistic practices than their counterparts at Westminster. Their involvement in adversarial and humorous exchanges suggests that in the Scottish Parliament women are not 'interlopers' but members who feel that they belong to the institution on equal terms with men. This is reinforced by the observation that women MSPs break rules and challenge the Presiding Officer in the Scottish Parliament, but not in the House of Commons. These observations suggest that the involvement of women in the Scottish Parliament from its origins, the higher proportion of women MSPs, and the actual design of the debating chamber may contribute to a more egalitarian culture than exists in the House of Commons. Male MSPs also behave differently to their counterparts in the House of Commons – they do not make sexist comments about women MSPs, they are less adversarial, and there are examples of collaborative humorous exchanges expressing solidarity between men and women. The use of first name address forms by male and female MSPs is indicative of the more relaxed, egalitarian culture of the assembly which appears to give women MSPs as much power in debates as men.

Notes

¹ These groups included the Campaign for a Scottish Parliament; the Scottish Constitutional Convention; the Civic Assembly and other campaign bodies such as Common Cause; Scotland United, Democracy for Scotland and the Women's co-ordination group (Brown 2000; 542).

² Alice Brown (2000; 543) claims that it was the period in which the Conservative government came to power in 1979 that voting patterns started to diverge significantly. She also states that the Conservative Party was politically opposed to the principle of devolution. 1979 was also the date of a referendum in Scotland on devolution which failed to deliver constitutional change for Scotland. The Scottish people voted narrowly for an assembly (52% voted 'yes') but failed to achieve a large enough majority to implement devolution (Hassan 1999: 168).

³ A cross-party forum which contained representatives of Labour and Liberal Democrat parties (but not Conservative or SNP), local authorities, trade unions and other bodies. Its first report 'Towards Scotland's Parliament' was published in 1990.

⁴ An all-party group set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland to propose working methods of the Parliament, rules and procedures and Standing orders, financial issues, information technology, code of conduct and media issues.

⁵ The 'twinning' or 'pairing' system invites women and men to stand for a pair of twinned constituency seats. The woman who receives most of the votes from the list of women candidates is selected for one seat, and the man with the most votes from the male list is selected for the other. This system was brought in to replace all-women short-lists which were ruled against by an Industrial Tribunal in 1995.

⁶ The parliament has all-purpose subject committees, which combine the roles of both standing and select committees in the Westminster model. Each committee has between five and 15 members. Members are appointed by Parliament.

⁷ This claim is made in the text of the 'Parliament Buildings' section of the Scottish parliament Website: www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliament_buildings/dchamber.html.

⁸ Labour has 63% of the Westminster seats, and the Conservatives only 25%. See table 10 Chapter Six, p.189.

⁹ The full names of these political Parties are: The Scottish Labour Party, the Scottish National Party, the Scottish Conservative Party, and the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

¹⁰ The other parties are: the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) with one member (Tommy Sheridan); the Scottish Green Party with one member (Robin Harper) and one independent MSP (Dennis Canavan).

¹¹ The 'critical mass' theory (Kanter 1977) is discussed in the section on Women and Politics in Chapter Two, section 2.2.4. p.39.

¹² Executive Question Times are equivalent to Departmental Question Times in the House of Commons. Unlike the Westminster system where each department in turn has a half-hour question time, all the Ministers in the Scottish Executive can be questioned on their responsibilities in the half hour Executive Question Time sessions (which occur every day the parliament is sitting).

¹³ Another advantage is that all the MSPs who wish to speak in a debate must be present at the start of a debate, unlike the Westminster system, where MPs can come into the chamber to speak half way through a debate.

¹⁴ See Appendix 4, p.364 for a list of the full contents of the data corpus.

¹⁵ Debate one is the Private Member's Bill on the 6th December 2000 proposed by Tommy Sheridan (SSP) on the Abolition of Poindings and Warrant Seals, which lasted for two and a half hours. The second debate is the opposition motion on Transport proposed by Bruce Crawford of the SNP which took place on the 14th December 2000 and lasted for three hours.

¹⁶ As for this category of 'debates' in Table 3, Chapter 5, p.131 this includes all speech events other than First Minister's Questions and Executive Question Times.

¹⁷ Poindings and Warrant Seals give creditors in Scotland additional rights to reclaim property, forcibly if necessary.

¹⁸ Successful interventions only were included as legal 'give way' interventions, unsuccessful attempts are referred to in section 8.3.2.2. (Refusing to comply with a request to give way. p.249).

¹⁹ This is also the case in debate one where a female Minister opposes the opposition motion, and is responsible for many of the give way requests.

²⁰ This presumes that it is equally possible to hear illegal interventions on the video data from each chamber. It may be that it is harder to hear illegal interventions in the Scottish parliament as

it is more spacious than the House of Commons and members are physically further away from each other.

²¹ The speech events used for this analysis are marked with a '#' in Appendix 4, p.364.

²² Only two categories of parliamentary status are used for the Scottish Parliament (low and high) whereas three are used in the House of Commons. This is because the 'mid' status category used for the House of Commons analysis was based on whether an MP belonged to a select Committee or not, and the low status category was used for MPs with no additional responsibilities. In the Scottish parliament nearly all MSPs belong to a committee so the means by which to classify 'mid' status MSPs is removed. So MSPs who belong to a committee are classified as being 'low' status, and MSPs with other additional responsibilities are classified as 'high' status.

²³ In the Scottish parliament the leader of the SNP is John Swinney, the Conservative leader is David McLetchie and the Liberal Democrat leader is Jim Wallace.

²⁴ This table shows the adversarial scores for male MSP's adversarial questions.

The only adversarial question made by a female MSP had an adversarial score of 2.

Party	Labour			SNP			Conservative			LibDem			Other		
Status	L	H	T	L	H	T	L	H	T	L	H	T	L	H	T
Adv. score															
1	4			1	2			2							
2	1				2			1							
3															
4															
5					1										
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															
13															
14															
Total	5			1	5		3								

²⁵ House of Commons MPs also use questioning turns to express their own opinions, but they use question forms in order to do so.

²⁶ Compared the Prime Minister's 62 adversarial and 38 non-adversarial responses in PMQT sessions (Chapter Six, Section 6.5.6, p.201).

²⁷ and 28 (below)

²⁸ Catch-phrases from the 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' television game-show.

²⁹ Six out of twenty-five instances of humorous talk were produced by women in the Scottish Parliament data corpus.

³⁰ In question times, the first question (which has been written and submitted in advance) must be read by the questioner. This is a formality as the questioner invariably wants to ask the Minister or First Minister the supplementary questions that follow (for which the Minister/First Minister has not had time to prepare).

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

9.1. Overview and Main Findings

In this thesis I set out to investigate the linguistic practices of politicians in order to discover how power is constructed in House of Commons speech events, and to establish the extent to which gender is salient in the construction of powerful speakers. Taking a definition of power as ‘based on the control of resources, and their defense’ (Henley 1977), the success of MPs in securing speaking turns and gaining the floor can be related to their control over this limited resource, and therefore their power in debates. The analysis of floor apportionment showed that the official or legal contributions of women MPs (both allocated speaking turns and ‘give way’ interventions) are proportional to their representation in the institution, and both women and men are in theory subject to the same official rules. There is therefore nominal equality between men and women MPs in terms of participation, and women MPs are not disadvantaged as speakers in a straightforward way in this CoP.

This finding was not predicted by previous research on gender and participation in public speech events. For example, Lyn Kathlene’s (1994, 1995) research on floor apportionment in U.S. state legislatures found that men took more turns than women in committee hearings, and Edelsky’s (1981) research on male and female participation in university faculty meetings similarly found that men took more turns than women (see also the review of this research in section 2.2.3., p.32). Perhaps more surprising than this equality of allocated speaking turns is the participation of women MPs in ‘give way’ interventions. Interactionally give way interventions are a challenge to the floor-holder, and therefore may be expected to fall within the category of ‘challenging utterances’ thought to be one of the strategies associated with male rather than female speakers (Holmes 1992: 134).

Apart from the equality of participation in the legal floor of the House of Commons, there are some substantial differences between the linguistic practices of the two gender groups and it is possible to argue that these differences disadvantage women MPs. Men dominate the illegal floor by making illegal

interventions that can also encroach upon the legal floor. This means that men make more interventions than women MPs overall, and this practice constructs male MPs as more powerful participants as they assume the entitlement to break the rules. Additionally, women MPs appear reluctant to adopt the most adversarial forms of parliamentary discourse, and as adversarial language is highly valued in this context this may disadvantage them. It is possible that women MPs in their reluctance to use adversarial language are missing the opportunity to be seen as effective speakers by their superiors, and this may disadvantage their political advancement. Finally, women seem to be excluded from or marginal to certain practices that involve the manipulation of key, like joking and filibustering. These practices seem to reinforce 'fraternal networks' (Walsh 2000) through cross-party solidarity between male MPs. These practices also assert a high level of competence and confidence with arcane parliamentary procedures. As with rule-breaking practices, the fact that these practices are used mainly by men constructs women as peripheral members of the CoP.

The comparative analysis of the linguistic practices of men and women MSPs in the Scottish Parliament with the findings from the House of Commons suggests that institutional reform does appear to reduce gender inequality. Many of the differences found between men and women MPs in the House of Commons apply less, or not at all to this newer assembly. Women MSPs make illegal interventions, they challenge the Presiding Officer, and take part in cross-party humorous exchanges. This, together with the finding that the Scottish Parliament is generally less adversarial than the House of Commons may reflect the different procedures (such as the use of names rather than more formal address forms) that were put in place in order to achieve a more participative, less confrontational assembly. The involvement of women MSPs in practices that are exclusively or mainly male in the House of Commons suggests that the Scottish Parliament CoP is less polarised along gender lines than the House of Commons. This may reflect the higher numbers of women MSPs (as well as high numbers of powerful or high status women MSPs) and their position as founder members of the parliament.

9.2. Explanations of Gender Differences in the House of Commons

As presented above, the differences in the linguistic practices of men and women MPs show that gender is a salient factor affecting their terms of participation within the House of Commons CoP. These gendered linguistic practices appear to construct women as peripheral members because rule-breaking activities, adversarial language, and humour are practices mainly or wholly undertaken by men. One possible explanation for these differences could be that women consciously choose to behave differently by rejecting the male, elitist, old-fashioned traditions of the Commons. An alternative explanation is that the different behaviour of men and women MPs is a result of coercive forces within the CoP which mean that women are made to feel like 'interlopers' (Eckert 1998) in the community, subject to negative sanctions such as sexist barracking and negative stereotyping.

It is likely that both these explanations play a part in explaining men and women MPs' differential linguistic practices. In an analysis of the marginal position of women priests in the Church of England, Clare Walsh finds that their position is partly the effect of their own belief in women's 'civilizing difference', and partly the effect of sexist reactions to them by male priests and by the media. Walsh finds that 'what *is* clear is that their language and behaviour is more likely than those of male colleagues to be fractured by competing, and often contradictory norms and expectations' (Walsh 2001: 201).

In interviews women MPs identified practices such as barracking and cheering as male activities (for example Appendix 2, Interview B, lines 80-85) in which they consciously did not participate. They also expressed the belief that women MPs behave differently from men: '*we're doing things differently and we know we're doing things differently*' (Appendix 2, Interview A, line 433). However, some of the interviewees expressed contradictory attitudes in this respect. Having identified 'male' practices and stated they did not engage in them, they also claimed that they had to '*ape the men's behaviour because that's the only way you're going to get anywhere*'¹. There is also evidence to suggest that there are differences between women MPs, as some of them embrace the masculine norms

of the House of Commons and adopt these 'male' linguistic practices: for example one extremely adversarial question is asked by a senior female Conservative MP². The fact that women MPs do not have consistent reactions to the avoidance of these 'male' linguistic practices suggests that women MPs' *choice* of non-participation in these practices cannot fully explain the differences found.

There is evidence to suggest that women MPs' lack of participation in male discursive practices may be due to coercive forces leading them to have a marginal 'interloper' status within the CoP. Some women MPs recognise their status as that of 'interloper': *'my strategy is to try and be an insider. When quite clearly I was never going to be an insider in the House of Commons my strategy was to build up my strength outside'* (Appendix 2, Interview D, lines 92-94). Women MPs are constructed as outsiders by sexist barracking, which is common (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.2.1., p.141), and their exclusion from cross-party exchanges expressing solidarity. This may serve to strengthen the 'fraternal networks' (Walsh 2000: 301) against women MPs. Negative sanctions outside the chamber are also pertinent, as the media characterisation of women MPs as 'Stepford wives', 'clones' and 'Blair's babes' clearly have an effect on the women themselves (for example see Appendix 2, Interview A, p.312, lines 255-275, 400-408), and are taken up and used against women MPs through barracking within the chamber. As noted at the end of Chapter Five, the imposition of these negative sanctions upon women MPs may mean that they can only pay 'meticulous attention to symbolic capital' rather than attention to their actions and abilities in order to prove their worthiness (Eckert 1998: 67-73). This has also been viewed as the 'double bind' between being professional and being feminine:

When a woman is placed in a position in which being assertive and forceful is necessary, she is faced with a paradox; she can be a good woman but a bad professional, or vice versa. To do both is impossible. (Lakoff 1990: 206).

These coercive forces may therefore result in women MPs avoiding rule-breaking or norm-challenging practices in order to satisfy the requirements of their

‘interloper’ status by being ‘beyond reproach’ with respect to the formal CoP rules.

9.3. Women, Men and Co-operative and Competitive speech styles

The claim that in public contexts women favour co-operative styles of speech, and men favour competitive styles (Holmes 1992, 1995; Coates 1991, 1996) can be viewed as ideologically salient in the House of Commons. It is a belief held by some women MPs that women bring a more consensual style to politics and avoid overtly adversarial linguistic practices (see section 2.2.2., p.29). The use of a consensual political style by women MPs can also be viewed as an expectation placed upon women MPs from outside the institution (for example by the public and the media), and forms part of the pressure upon women MPs to ‘prove that it makes a difference when more women are elected’ (Dahlerup 1988: 279). Within the House of Commons in particular this is a contradictory expectation as women are also expected to ‘prove that they are just like (just as able as) male politicians’ (Dahlerup 1988: 279) by engaging in the adversarial, competitive discursive norms.

The linguistic behaviour of men and women MPs in relation to competitive and co-operative styles is complex, and this dichotomy does not apply to most linguistic practices in a straightforward way. For example, cross-party humour adopts the superficial appearance of adhering to the institution’s adversarial norms, but underlying this it expresses solidarity (and therefore some degree of consensus) between male MPs. This may therefore be an example of the ‘productive competition’ associated with ‘fraternal networks’ (Walsh 2001: 204). Filibustering male MPs undertake challenging behaviour in terms of confronting the Speaker to break the rules, but this is essentially a collaborative group practice that needs a sustained sequence of speakers to take part, and the supportive interventions of other MPs. Women MPs do not avoid adversarial contributions altogether, although previous empirical evidence presented for the existence of a women’s co-operative style would suggest that this might be the case.

This suggests that the co-operative/competitive dichotomy of female and male styles is inadequate to explain the linguistic behaviour of MPs. This agrees with the assessment of Goodwin (1990) and Cameron (1998b) that this dichotomy leads to an over-simplification of the complexities of interaction in which the presence of a competitive element need not rule out a co-operative element (and vice versa).

9.4. Gender and Language in Public Contexts and the Workplace

Judith Baxter's (1999a, 1999b) research on gender and language in public contexts investigated why girls (relative to boys) experience difficulties when they are required to speak in formal, public or unfamiliar contexts. Although Baxter found that the dominant speakers in mixed-sex groups were all boys, she suggests that this is largely due to the 'powerless ways they are positioned in the classroom (and the world) by the discourse of gender differentiation' (1999b: 232). Baxter finds that an 'effective' public voice need not 'connote the normative voice of male authority, confidence and success' (1999a: 95). This thesis has shown many similarities with the findings of Baxter's research, in particular her description of boys' dominant behaviour in the classroom, which is similar to male MPs' dominant behaviour in debates (see Chapter Five, 5.7., p.151). There is also some evidence to suggest that the public voice need not 'connote the normative voice of male authority' in political assemblies. There are examples of effective female speakers who do not simply adopt a 'male' voice. For example, the analysis of the adversarial style in Chapter Six gave a number of examples of Margaret Beckett's responses to departmental questions³. These showed Beckett using a range of adversarial and non-adversarial features in her responses. These include her refusal to respond adversarially to the personal criticisms of her questioner but also her production of responses that serve to increase the adversarial nature of a questioning turn. The participation of women MSPs in the Scottish Parliament also supports the idea that the 'effective public voice' need not only be associated with masculinity. For example, both Margo MacDonald and Dorothy Grace-Elder challenge the Presiding Officer and break the rules (Transcripts 38, p.273 and 33, p.254 respectively). Women MSPs appear

to participate effectively and fully in all types of interaction, including cross-party humour and illegal interventions.

The finding that the 'effective public voice' need not necessarily be associated with male speakers has to be qualified by stating that it *usually is* associated with male speakers in the House of Commons. Effective speakers like Margaret Beckett (who used adversarial and non-adversarial language) are the exception and not the norm in the House of Commons, whereas effective female speakers (who participated in rule-breaking activities) are the norm in the Scottish Parliament. This links to the idea of 'gendered spaces' (Freed 1996) in which elements of the setting and the communicative task of a speech event together become an index (Ochs 1992) of a gendered style. Social activities and practices become symbolically gendered if they are 'regularly and consistently associated with women or men' (Freed 1996: 67). This concept may contribute to an explanation of why women in the traditionally male dominated 'male space' of the House of Commons rarely take part in illegal interventions or adversarial questions. The apparent discomfort of speakers like Jane Griffiths (Transcript 1, p.121) and Oona King (Transcript 11, p.149) when faced with the enforcement of the rules by the Speaker provide a strong contrast with the confident and assertive challenges posed by the women MSPs mentioned above. The 'new' Scottish Parliament is unlikely to be a 'male space' in the same way as the House of Commons because it has never been wholly dominated by men.

Research on gender and language in the workplace suggests that women and men enact professional authority in different ways in traditionally male dominated professions. Research on asymmetrical encounters between doctors and patients (West 1990, Ainsworth-Vaughn 1992) suggests that gender plays an important part in the way in which the rights and obligations of participants are played out. Women doctors (but not men doctors) have been found to minimise the status differentials between themselves and their patients by using mitigated directives and polite forms. Although politeness strategies were not observed to be consistently used by women MPs, one woman MP reported that her 'natural reaction' to an illegal intervention was one of politeness: *'my instinct is to look up and stop what I'm saying and say 'can I help you?' or 'what were you saying?'*

or *'do you want to come into this conversation?'* (Appendix 2, Interview E, lines 253-256). Rather than being a 'natural' response, politeness (as well as the reluctance to use adversarial language) can be interpreted as another way in which women negotiate their 'interloper' status by being 'beyond reproach' (Eckert 1998) in a male dominated CoP. The avoidance of adversarial language can also be viewed as a 'critical act' purposefully employed by some MPs in order to resist the dominant adversarial style (see section 9.5. below).

9.5. Women, Language and Institutional Change

The findings reported in this thesis suggest that the 1997 intake of women MPs in the House of Commons did not instigate any substantial change in the linguistic norms and procedures of the debating chamber. The fact that increased numbers of women MPs entered the House of Commons at this time calls into question the 'critical mass' theory (Kanter 1977), in that increased numbers of women MPs as a factor on its own is unlikely to promote change. Yoder (1991) suggests that it is sexism, rather than group size that produces inequalities. The ability of women MPs to change the institution is also likely to be hindered by conflicting expectations: as mentioned in section 9.2., they must downplay their identification as *women* politicians in order to prove that they are just as able as male politicians; and yet their identification as women politicians is expected to bring about improvements to the institution (Dahlerup 1988: 279).

The expectations of women MPs and the problems they encounter as 'interlopers' in the CoP are multiple. These include their exclusion from informal (male) networks, negative stereotyping and role conflicts (being perceived as being too feminine or too masculine) (Dahlerup 1988). Walsh (2000: 274) claims that these 'socially ascribed expectations that pull in opposite directions' are managed by the tendency of women to shift between masculine and feminine discursive styles. There is evidence to suggest that some women MPs adopt male discursive norms in the House of Commons, or that they expect to have to do so. This adoption is seen by Bonnie McElhinny (1998) as a necessary process of change in historically male-dominated professions. However, more striking than the

adoption of male discursive norms by women MPs (such as the use of adversarial language and illegal interventions) is their adaptation to these norms through non-participation. As well as possibly disadvantaging women MPs interactionally, this non-participation is also likely to reinforce their 'interloper' status. As Judith Baxter remarks of girls' non-participation in the classroom:

If girls (...) tend to opt out of pursuing their speaking turns in this way, they must surely lose confidence about the value of what they have to say, about their ability to sustain a contribution in a mixed-sex setting, and to 'run the gauntlet' of seizing and maintaining a speaking turn within multiple conversations. Instead they will regard it as 'natural' that girls are quieter and more reticent, whereas boys are louder and more garrulous. (1999b: 235)

There is also no evidence to suggest that women are actively promoting the co-operative or consensual styles thought to be favoured by many professional women (Coates 1994). This means that in the debating chamber there does not appear to be any process of 'conversationalization' of the public sphere 'whereby interpersonally-orientated discursive practices are displacing purely transactional ones' (Walsh 2001: 6). As discussed in Chapter Two, it is also questionable whether there is scope for the incorporation of consensual or co-operative styles in such a highly masculinized, fundamentally adversarial forum as the House of Commons. As Holmes (1992: 144) points out: 'there is no obvious incentive for adult males to give up highly valued talking time in public contexts'.

Dahlerup (1988) and Walsh (2000, 2001) view institutional change as contingent upon the 'critical acts' undertaken by the female minority group. The most significant factor in changing the position of the minority is the 'willingness and ability of the minority to mobilise the resources of the institution to improve the situation for themselves and the whole minority group' (Dahlerup 1988: 296). Walsh (2000, 2001) finds that groups like the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) in the Northern Ireland assembly have helped to promote an alternative set of linguistic norms for political debates through an organised campaign focussed upon increasing the presence and treatment of women in the assembly.

In order for women MPs to organise and promote change in the House of Commons they must therefore maintain a 'critical difference' approach. As Walsh points out:

Even a small number of women can make an impact upon dominant discursive norms, if they pursue a 'critical difference' approach, whereas the voices of large numbers of women can be assimilated, if they choose to adopt a policy of accommodation to pre-existing norms and practices. (2000: 273).

However, the identification of women MPs as feminists and their ability to form political solidarity beyond the divisions created by party allegiances appears to be problematic. As one interviewee remarks:

I think it would be good if we could get women of all parties together but I don't think it will happen (...) the men would use it and say 'Oh look there's a group of women they must be weak to need that'. You just can't afford to draw attention to the fact that you're a woman. (Appendix 2, Interview B, lines 187-194)

As well as the willingness and ability of women MPs to undertake 'critical acts', the processes for reform within an institution are likely to affect the ability of its members to engender change. In her research on the position of women priests in the Church of England, Walsh finds that 'a creative dialectic can exist between institutional structures and the ability of individual agents to subvert and transform these' (2001: 202). However, while Walsh finds that the Church of England is in a period of modernisation that can only strengthen this dialectic, there are no parallel developments in the institutional structures of the House of Commons. As noted in Chapter Two, the 'modernisation committee' is unpopular with MPs and has failed to instigate fundamental change (Seaton and Winetrobe 1999). Individual agency must be accompanied by institutional reform in order to be successful, and without this it is difficult for the conscious efforts of individual women MPs to override the effects of the coercive forces outlined in section 9.2. above.

The analysis of the linguistic practices of women MSPs in the Scottish Parliament also supports the idea that these elements have to be in place in order for

institutional change to occur. Rather than adopting the adversarial, masculinised culture of politics from Westminster along with many of its rules and procedures, the Scottish Parliament does appear to be more egalitarian and less gendered than the House of Commons. Women's pressure groups were involved in the consultation process which led to the establishment of the parliament, and electoral reform ensured that a substantial number of women MSPs were elected⁴. It appears that it is only when women collectively organise and initiate change in institutions that are 'open' to reform that substantial gains in women's presence and participation in those institutions can be achieved.

9.6. The Relationship of the Thesis to Women in Politics

As discussed in Chapter Three, this research cannot claim to be directly empowering for women politicians. It does however contribute to a growing body of work (in particular Judith Baxter (1999a, 1999b) and Clare Walsh (2000, 2001)), which aims to investigate the particular constraints and obstacles facing women in public and political contexts. This thesis indicates that there is a connection between power and rule-breaking rather than conformity to the 'official' rules of debates. Men achieve power and dominance not by conforming to the official rules, but by recognising how these speech events are *actually* 'played', which often involves breaking the official rules. Women may not be as free to flout rules as men: when girls shout out in the classroom or women in the House of Commons intervene illegally they may be subject to negative sanctions because this confounds gender expectations.

Whether for personal advantage or for strategic political gain such as the self-consciously political rule-breaking behaviour of the NIWC (Walsh 2001: 117), an understanding of the way in which language, gender and power are constructed in these public contexts can give women a clearer basis from which to consider undertaking the 'critical acts' that promote institutional change. Women MPs in the House of Commons (girls in the classroom, and women priests in the Church of England) do not appear to benefit from their attempts to prove their worthiness by appearing beyond reproach in these CoPs. Women may therefore be

empowered by understanding how a particular institutional or professional language game is really played, and what the real costs and rewards of their existing strategies might be.

Notes

¹ This statement was made by Jackie Ballard (Appendix 2, Interview B, lines 94-95, p.326). Another female Labour MP expresses this contradictory attitude, at first claiming that '*we're doing things differently and we know we're doing things differently*' and that '*we have to hold our nerve and not turn into the men*' but then stating that '*I think gradually we'll be sucked into behaving the way they (the men) behave because that's what they want, the establishment*' (Appendix 2, Interview A, p. 321, lines 433, 439-40, 459-461).

² See Chapter Six, Table 16, p.198. This MP was Ann Widdecombe.

³ Margaret Beckett was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the time (see Transcripts 14, 16, 17 and 19, p.177-183).

⁴ Details of these groups and electoral processes are given in Chapter Eight, section 8.2.1., p.237.

Bibliography

- Abdela, L. (2000) 'From palm tree to parliament: Training women for political leadership and public life', *Gender and Development*. 8 3 16-23.
- Acker, J., Barry, J. and Esseveld, J. (1983) 'Issues in feminist research', *Women's Studies International Forum*. 6 4 423-435.
- Adams, K. L. (1992) 'Accruing power on debate floors', in Hall, K., Bucholtz, M. and Moonwomon, B. (eds), 1-10.
- Adams, K. L. (1999) 'Deliberate dispute and the construction of oppositional stance', *Pragmatics*. 9 2 231-248.
- Adelsward, V. (1989) 'Laughter and dialogue: the social significance of laughter in institutional discourse', *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* .12 107-36.
- Agha, A. (1997) 'Tropic Aggression in the Clinton-Dole Presidential debate', *Pragmatics*. 7 4 461-497.
- Ainsworth-Vaughn, N. (1992) 'Topic transitions in physician-patient interviews: power, gender and discourse change', *Language and Society*. 21 409-26.
- Atkinson, M. (1984) *Our Masters' Voices*. London: Routledge.
- Atkinson, M. (1985) 'Refusing invited applause: Preliminary observations from a case study of charismatic oratory', in Dijk, T. A. -van (ed), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis (III) Discourse and Dialogue*. London: Academic Press. 43-56.
- Atkinson, M. and Heritage, J. (1999) 'Jefferson's transcript notation', in Jaworski, J. and Coupland, N. (eds), 158-166.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F. and Harris, S.J. (1997) *Managing Language: The Discourse of Corporate Meetings*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin.
- Barnes, D. (1976) *From Communication to Curriculum*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Baumaan, M. (1976) 'Two features of women's speech?', in Dubois, B.L. and Crouch, I. (eds), *The Sociology of the Languages of American Women*. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University. 439-499.
- Baxter, J. (1999a) 'Teaching girls to speak out: the female voice in public contexts', *Language and Education*. 13 2 81-98.
- Baxter, J. (1999b) *Teaching Girls to Speak Out: An investigation of the extent to which gender is a pertinent discourse for describing and assessing girls'*

- and boys' speech in public contexts*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Reading.
- Beard, A. (2000) *The Language of Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Beattie, G. (1983) *Talk: An Analysis of Speech and Non-verbal Behaviour in Conversation*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Bergvall, V., Bing, J. and Freed, A. (eds) (1996) *Re-thinking Gender and Language Research: Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Longman.
- Bergvall, V. (1999) 'Towards a comprehensive theory of language and gender', *Language in Society*. 28 273-293.
- Berrington, H. (1995) 'Political Ethics: The Nolan Report', *Government and Opposition*. 30 429-51.
- Besnier, N. (1989) 'Information withholding as a manipulative and collusive strategy in Nukulaelae gossip', *Language in Society*. 18 315-41.
- Biesecker, B. (1994) 'Coming to terms with recent attempts to write women into the history of rhetoric', in Poulakos, T. (ed), 153-172.
- Biffen, J. (1996) *Inside Westminster*. London: Grafton Books.
- Blakemore, D. (1987) *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bogoch, B. (1999) 'Courtroom discourse and the gendered construction of professional identity', *Law and Social Inquiry: Journal of the American Bar Foundation*. 24 2 329-375.
- Bohan, J. (1993) 'Regarding gender: essentialism, constructionism and feminist psychology'. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 17 5-22.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity and Blackwell.
- Bourdieu, P. (1999) 'Language and Symbolic Power' in Jaworski, A. and Coupland, N. (eds), *The Discourse Reader*. 502-513.
- Brenneis, D. (1988) 'Language and Disputing', *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 17 221-217.
- Briggs, C. (ed) (1997) 'Conflict and Violence in Pragmatic Research', *Pragmatics* 7 4 42-59 (Special Issue).

- Broughton, S. and Palmieri, S. (1999) 'Gendered contributions to parliamentary debates: The case of euthanasia', *Australian Political Studies Association*. 34 1 29-45.
- Brouwer, D. and De Haan, D. (1987) *Women's language, Socialization and Self Image*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Brown, A. (1998) 'Representing women in politics', *Parliamentary Affairs*. 51 3 435-444.
- Brown, A. (2000) 'Designing the Scottish Parliament', *Parliamentary Affairs*. 53 3 542-556.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1978) 'Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena'. in Goody, E. (ed), *Questions and Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 56-310.
- Brown, W. (1988) *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Bryman, A. (1988, 2000) *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble*. London, Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (1985, 1992) *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan.
- Cameron, D. (1996) 'The language-gender interface: challenging co-optation', in Bergvall et al. (eds), 31-53.
- Cameron, D. (1997a) 'Theoretical debates in feminist linguistics: Questions of sex and gender', in Wodak, R. (ed), 21-37.
- Cameron, D. (1997b) 'Performing gender identity: Young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity', in Johnson, S. and Meinhof, U.H. (eds), *Language and Masculinity*. London: Blackwell. 47-64.
- Cameron, D. (1998a) 'Is there any ketchup Vera?': gender, power and pragmatics', *Discourse and Society*. 9 4 437-455.
- Cameron, D. (1998b) 'Performing gender identity: Young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity' in Coates, J. (ed), 270-284.
- Cameron, D. (2000) *Good to Talk?*. London: Sage.
- Cameron, D. (2001) *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: Sage.
- Cameron, D., McAlindon, F. and O'Leary, K. (1989) 'Lakoff in context: the social and linguistic functions of tag questions', in Coates, J. and

- Cameron, D. (eds), *Women in their Speech Communities*. London, Longman. 74-93.
- Cameron, D., Frazer, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, M.B.H. and Richardson, K. (1992) *Researching Language: Issues of Power and Method*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Campbell, J. and Jerry, E. 'Women and Speaker: a conflict in roles'. in Brehm, S. (ed), *Seeing Female: Social Roles and Personal Lives*. New York: Greenwood Press. 123-33.
- Campbell, K.K. (1989) *Man Cannot Speak for Her*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Campbell, K.K. (1995) 'Gender and genre: loci of invention and contradiction in the earliest speeches by US women', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 81 4 479-495.
- Campbell, R. (1995) 'Weaving a tapestry of research: A bibliography of selected readings on feminist research methods', *Women's Studies International Forum*. 18 2 215-222.
- Carli, L. (1990) 'Gender, age and influence', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 59 5 941-51.
- Carroll, S. (1985) *Women as Candidates in American Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Carrol, S.J., Dodson, D.L. and Mandel, R.B. (1991) *The Impact of Women in Public Office: An Overview*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for American Women in Politics.
- Case, S.S. (1988) 'Cultural differences, not deficiencies: an analysis of managerial women's language', in Rose, S. and Larwood, L. (eds), *Women's Careers: Pathways and Pitfalls*. New York: Praeger. 41-63.
- Case, S.S. (1992) 'Organizational inequality in a steel plant: A language model', in Hall, K., Bucholtz, M. and Moonwomon, B. (eds), 36-48.
- Cashion, J. and Erickson, K. (1987) 'You'll love this one...An exploration into joke prefacing devices', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. 5 303-312.
- Childs, S. (2000) 'The new Labour women MPs in the 1997 British Parliament', *Women's History Review*. 9 1 55-73.

- Chomsky, N. (1965) *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Coates, J. (1986, 1993) *Women, Men and Language*. London and New York: Longman.
- Coates, J. and Cameron, D. (eds) (1989) *Women in their Speech Communities*. London and New York: Longman.
- Coates, J. (1989) 'Gossip revisited: language in all-female groups', in Coates, J and Cameron, D. (eds), 75-94.
- Coates, J. (1994) 'The language of the professions: discourse and career', in Evetts, J. (ed), *Women and Career: Themes and Issues in Advanced Industrial Societies*. London and New York: Longman. 72-86.
- Coates, J. (1995) 'Language, gender and career', in Mills, S. (ed), 13-30.
- Coates, J. (1996) *Women Talk: Conversation between women friends*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. (ed) (1998) *Language and Gender: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cockcroft, R. and Cockcroft, S. (1992) *Persuading People: An Introduction to Rhetoric*. London: The MacMillan Press.
- Cohn, C. (1989) 'Sex and Death in the rational world of defense intellectuals' in Malson et.al. (eds) *Feminist Theory in Practice and Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cooper, L. (1960) *The Rhetoric of Aristotle: An expanded Translation with Supplementary Examples for Students of Composition and Public Speaking*. London: Prentice-Hall.
- Coser, R. (1960) 'Laughter among colleagues', *Psychiatry*. 23 81-95.
- Craig, D. and Pitts, M.K. (1990) 'The dynamics of dominance in tutorial discussions', *Linguistics*. 28 1 125-38.
- Crawford, M. (1988) 'Gender, age and the social evaluation of assertion', *Behaviour Modification*. 12 549-64.
- Crawford, M. (1989) 'Agreeing to differ: Feminist epistemologies and women's ways of knowing', in Crawford, M. and Gentry, M. (eds), *Gender and Thought*. New York: Springer-Verlag. 128-45.
- Crawford, M. and Gressley, D (1991) 'Creativity, caring and context', in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 15 217-231.
- Crawford, M. (1995) *Talking Difference*. London: Sage.

- Crick, B, and Millar, D. (1995) *To Make the Parliament of Scotland a Model for Democracy*. Edinburgh: John Wheatley Centre.
- Criddle, B. (1997) 'MPs and candidates', in Butler, D. and Kavanagh, D. (eds), *The British general Election of 1997*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. 46-58.
- Crosby, F and Nyquist, L. (1977) 'The female register: an empirical study of Lakoff's hypothesis', *Language and Society*. 6 313-22.
- Dahlerup, D. (1988) 'From a small to a large minority: women in Scandinavian politics'. *Nordic Political Science Association*. 11 4 275-298.
- Danet, B. and Bogoch, B. (1980) 'Fixed fight or free for all? An empirical study of combativeness in the adversary system of justice', *British Journal of Law and Society*. 7 38-60.
- Davis, D. (1989) *A Guide to Parliament*. London: Penguin.
- Davis, K. (1988) 'Paternalism under the microscope', in Todd A.D. and Fisher, S. (eds) *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*. Norwood NJ: Ablex.
- DeFrancisco, V. (1991) 'The sounds of silence: How men silence women in marital relations', *Discourse and Society*. 2 413-423.
- Derrida, J. (1987) 'Difference', in Kamuf, P. (ed), *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf . 59-79.
- Deuchar, M. (1988) 'A pragmatic account of women's use of standard speech', in Coates, J. and Cameron, D. (eds), 27-32.
- Dijk.T.A.-van. (ed) (1985) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Academic Press.
- Dijk, T.A.-van. (ed) (1997) *Discourse Studies: a Multidisciplinary Introduction, I: Discourse as Structure and Process; II: Discourse as Social Interaction*. London: Sage.
- Dijk, T.A.-van (1998) *Categories for the Critical Analysis of Parliamentary Debates about Immigration*. (Unpublished).
- Dijk, T.A.-van (1998) *Ideology: A Multi-disciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.
- Dillon, J.T. (1990) *The Practice of Questioning*. London: Routledge.
- Dillon, J.T. (1988) 'Annotated Bibliography of Question Asking', *Questioning Exchange*. 2 81-5.
- Douglas, M. (1975) *Implicit Meanings*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul.

- Drew, P. (1985) 'Analyzing the use of language in courtroom interaction', in Dijk, T. A.-van (ed), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis (III) Discourse and Dialogue*. London: Academic Press.133-147.
- Drew, P. and Heritage, J. (eds) (1992) *Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dubois, B.L. and Crouch, I. (1975) 'The question of question tags in women's speech: They don't really make more use of them, do they?', *Language and Society*. 4 289-94.
- Duerst Lahti, G., and Kelly, R.M. (1995) *Gender, Power, Leadership and Governance*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Dunstan, R. (1980) 'Context for coercion: Analysing properties of courtroom 'questions'', *British Journal of Law and Society*. 7 61-77.
- Duranti, A. (1997) *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eagle, M. and Lovenduski, J. (1998) *High Time or High Tide for Labour Women?* London: Fabian Society.
- Eakins, B and Eakins, R.G. (1976) 'Verbal turn-taking exchanges in faculty dialogue', in Dubois, B.L. and Crouch, I. (eds), *The Sociology of the Languages of American Women*. Papers in Southwest English IV. San Antonio, TX: Trinity University. 53-62.
- Eckert, P. (1989) 'The whole woman: sex and gender differences in variation', *Language Variation and Change*. 3 245-67.
- Eckert, P. (1998) 'Gender and sociolinguistic variation', in Coates, J. (ed), 64-75.
- Eckert, P. and McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992) 'Communities of Practice: where language, gender and power all live', in Hall, K., Bucholtz, M. and Moonwomon, B. (eds), 88-99.
- Eckert, P. and McConnell-Ginet, S. (1999) 'New Generalisations and explanations in language and gender research', *Language and Society*. 28 2 185-201.
- Edelsky, C. (1981) 'Who's got the floor?', *Language in Society*. 10 383-421.
- Edelsky, C. and Adams, K.L. (1990). 'Creating equality: Breaking the rules in debates', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. 9 3 171-90.
- Eggins, S. and Slade, D. (1997) *Analysing Casual Conversation*. London: Cassell.

- Erickson, P. D. (1985) *Reagan Speaks: The Making of an American Myth*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Ervin-Tripp, S. and Lampert, M.D. (1992) 'Gender differences in the construction of humorous talk', in Hall, K., Bucholtz, M. and Moonwomon, B. (eds), 108-117.
- Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fasold, R. (1990) *Sociolinguistics of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Finer, S. (1974) *Comparative Government*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Fishman, P. (1978) 'Interaction: the work women do', *Social Problems*. 25 397-406.
- Fishman, P. (1980) 'Conversational Insecurity', in Giles, H., Robinson, W.P. and Smith, P. (eds), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Pergamon: Oxford. 127-32.
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Foucault, M. (1979) *Discipline and Punish*. Hammondsworth: Penguin.
- Freed, A. (1992) 'We understand perfectly: A critique of Tannen's view of cross-sex communication', in Hall, K. Bucholtz, M. and Moonwomon, B. (eds), 144-52.
- Freed, A. (1996) 'Language and gender in an experimental setting' in Bergvall, V., Bing, J. and Freed, A. (eds.), 54-76.
- Furnow, M. M. and Cook, J.A. (1991) *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Gal, S. (1991) 'Between speech and silence: the problematics of research on language and gender', in di Leonardo, M. (ed), *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 175-203.
- Gal, S. (1992) 'Language, gender and power: an anthropological view', in Hall, K., Bucholtz, M and Moonwomon, B. (eds), 153-61.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Garfinkel, H. (1974) 'On the origins of the term ethnomethodology', in Turner, R. (ed) *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin. 15-18.

- Geis, M. (1987) *The Language of Politics*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Giglioli, P. (1972) *Language and Social Context*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gill, R. (1998) 'Dialogues and differences: Writing, reflexivity and the Crisis of representation'. In Henwood, K. Griffin, C. and Phoenix, A. (eds) *Standpoints and Differences: Essays in the Practice of Feminist Psychology*. Sage: London. 18-43.
- Gilligan, C. (1982) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Goodwin, M.H. (1980) 'Directive-response speech sequences in girls' and boys' task activities', in McConnell-Ginet, S. et al. (eds), 157-73.
- Goodwin, M.H. (1988) 'Co-operation and competition across girl's play activities', in Coates, J. (ed), 121-146.
- Goodwin, M.H. (1990) *"He-said, She-said": Talk as social organisation among black children*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Graddol, D. and Swann, J. (1989) *Gender Voices*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Grice, H.P. (1975) 'Logic and conversation', in Cole, P. and Morgan, J. (eds) *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press. 41-58.
- Gumperz, J. (1982a) *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. (ed) (1982b) *Language and Social Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. and Hymes, D. (1972) *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gumperz, J. and Hymes, D. (1986) *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gunther, N. (1988) *Debating and Public Speaking*. Sydney: Reed Books PTY.
- Hacker, H.M. (1951) 'Women as a minority Group', *Social Forces*. 30 60-69.
- Hague, R., Harrop, M. and Breslin, S. (1998) *Comparative Government and Politics*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Hall, C. (1985) 'Private persons versus public someones: class, gender and politics in England. 1780-1850', in Steedman, C., Urwin, C. and Walkerdine, V. (eds), *Language, Gender and Childhood*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul. 10-33.

- Hall, K., Bucholtz, M. and Moonwomon, B. (eds) (1992) *Locating Power: Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference*. Berkeley, CA.: Berkeley Women and Language Group.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1983) *Ethnography*. London: Routledge.
- Hansen, S. B. (1997) 'Talking about politics: gender and contextual effects on political proselytizing', *The Journal of Politics*. 51 1 73-103.
- Harding, S. (ed) (1987) *Feminism and Methodology*. Indianapolis and Milton Keynes: Indiana University Press and Open University Press.
- Harman, H. (1993) *20th Century Man, 21st Century Woman: How Both Sexes Can Bridge the Century Gap*. London: Vermilion.
- Harman, H. and Mattinson, D. (2000) *Winning for Women*. London: The Fabian Society.
- Harris, S. (1984) 'Questions as a mode of control in a magistrate's court', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 49 5-27.
- Harris, S. (1986) 'Interviewers' questions in Broadcast Interviews'. *Belfast Working Papers in Language and Linguistics*. 8 50-86.
- Harris, S. (1989) 'Questions in political broadcast interviews', *Questioning Exchange*. 3 10-25.
- Hassan, G. (ed) (1999) *A Guide to the Scottish Parliament*. Edinburgh: The Stationary Office Ltd.
- Hauser, G. (1986) *An Introduction to Rhetorical Theory*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Hazell, R. (2000) *The State and the Nations*. London: Imprint Academic.
- Hearn, J. (1992) *Men in the Public Eye*. London: Routledge.
- Heatherington, A., Weaver, K. and Ryle, M. (1990) *Cameras in the Commons: The Study for the Hansard Society on the Televising of the House of Commons*. London: The Hansard Society.
- Hellweg, S. A., Dfau, M., and Brydon, S. (1992) *Televised Presidential Debates: Advocacy in Contemporary America*. New York: Praeger.
- Henley, N.M. (1977) *Body Politics: Power, Sex and Non-verbal Communication*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Henley, N. and Kramarae, C. (1991) 'Gender, power and miscommunication', in Coupland, N., Giles, H. and Wieman, J.M. (eds), *Miscommunication and Problematic Talk*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. 18-43.

- Henwood, K.L. (1996) 'Qualitative inquiry: perspectives, methods and psychology' in Richardson, J.T.E. (ed), 25-42.
- Heritage, J. (1985) 'Analysing news interviews' in Dijk, T.A.-van (ed), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis III*. New York: Academic Press. 95-119.
- Heritage, J and Greatbatch, D. (1986) 'Generating Applause: a study of rhetoric and response at party political broadcasts'. *British Journal of Sociology*. 91 110-57.
- Holmes, J. (1992) 'Women's talk in public contexts', *Discourse and Society*. 3 2 121-50.
- Holmes, J. (1995) *Women, men and Politeness*. London and New York: Longman.
- Holmes, J. and Meyerhoff, M. (1999) 'The community of practice: Theories and methodologies in language and gender research', in *Language in Society*. 28 173-183.
- Hymes, D. (1962) 'The ethnography of speaking', in Fishman, J. (1968) *Readings in the Sociology of Language*. The Hague: Mouton. 99-138.
- Hymes, D. (1972a) 'Models of the Interaction of language and Social Life', in Gumperz, J. and Hymes, D. (eds), 35-71.
- Hymes, D. (1972b) 'Toward Ethnographies of Communication: the Analysis of Communicative Events', in Giglioli, P. (ed). 21-44.
- Hymes, D. (1974) *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- James, D. and Clarke, S. (1992) 'Interruptions, gender and power: a critical review of the literature', in Hall, K., Bucholtz, M. and Moonwomon, B. (eds). 286-299.
- Jaworski, A. and Coupland, N. (1999) *The Discourse Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Jayaratne, T. E. and Stewart, A. (1991) 'Quantitative and qualitative methods in social sciences: current feminist issues and practical strategies', in Fonow, M.M. and Cook, J.A. (eds), *Beyond Methodology: Feminist scholarship as Lived Research*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 85-106.
- Jenkins, M. M. (1985) 'What's so funny?: Joking among women', in Bremner, S., Caskey, N. and Moonwomon, B. (eds), *Proceedings of the First Berkeley*

- Women and Language Conference*. Berkeley, CA. Berkeley Women and Language Group. 135-51.
- Jespersen, O. (1922) *Language: its Nature, Development and Origin*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Johnson, J.L. (1980) 'Questions and role responsibility in four professional meetings', *Anthropological Linguistics*. 22 66-76.
- Jones, D. (1980) 'Gossip: notes on women's oral culture', in Kramarae, C. (ed) *The Voices and Words of Women and Men*. Pergamon Press: Oxford. 193-8.
- Jucker, A.H. (1986) *News Interviews: A Pragma-Linguistic Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kanter, R.M. (1977) *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic.
- Kastely, J.L. (1997) *Rethinking the Rhetorical Tradition: From Plato to Postmodernism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Kathlene, L. (1990) 'A new approach to understanding the impact of gender on the legislative process', in Nielsen J.M. (ed), *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary readings in the social sciences*. 238-260.
- Kathlene, L. (1994) 'Power and influence in state legislative policy making: the interaction of gender and position in committee hearing debates'. *American Political Science Review*. 88 3 560-576.
- Kathlene, L. (1995) 'Position power versus gender power: Who holds the floor?' in Duerst-Lahti, G. and Kelly, R. (eds), *Gender, Power, Leadership and Governance*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press. 167-193.
- Kauppi, N. (1999) 'Power or subjection: French women politicians in the European parliament', *The European Journal of Women's Studies*. 6 329-340.
- Kendall, S. and Tannen, D. (1997) 'Gender and Language in the Workplace', in Wodak, R. (ed). 81-105.
- Kennedy, G. A. (1991) *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kennedy, G.A. (1997) *Comparative Rhetoric*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kitzinger, C. (2000) 'Doing Feminist Conversation Analysis', *Feminism and Psychology*. 10 2 163-93.

- Kothoff, H. and Wodak, R. (eds) (1997) *Communicating Gender in Context*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kothoff, H. (2000) 'Gender and joking: on the complexities of women's image politics in humorous narratives', *Journal of Pragmatics*. 32 1 55-80.
- Kramarae, C. (1985) 'Beyond sexist language', *Women's Review of Books*. 11 12
- Kress, G. and Hodge, B. (1979) *Language as Ideology*. London/Boston/Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Lakoff, R. (1975) *Language and Women's Place*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lakoff, R. (1990) *Talking Power: The Politics of Language*. San Francisco: Basic Books.
- Lapadat, J. and Seesahal, M. (1978) 'Male versus female codes in informal contexts', *Sociolinguistics Newsletter*. 8 7-8.
- Leeds, D. (1989) *Powerspeak*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Legman, G. (1968) *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An analysis of sexual humour*. New York: Grove Press.
- Levinson, S.C. (1983) *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lijphart, A. (1968) 'Typologies of democratic systems', *Comparative Political Studies*. 1 3-44.
- Logue, C.M. and Miller, E.F. (1995) 'Rhetorical status – a study of its origins, functions and consequences', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 81 1 20-47.
- Long, D. and Graesser, A. (1988) 'Wit and humour in discourse processing'. *Discourse Processes*. 11 35-60.
- Lovenduski, J. (1996) 'Sex, gender and British politics' in Lovenduski, J. and Norris, P. (eds), 3-18.
- Lovenduski, J. and Norris, P. (eds) (1993) *Gender and Party Politics*. London: Sage.
- Lovenduski, J. and Norris, P. (eds) (1996) *Women in Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lovenduski, J. and Randall, V. (1993) *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and Power in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Luff, D. (1999) 'Dialogue across the divides: Moments of rapport and power in feminist research with anti-feminist women', *Sociology*. 33 4 687-703.
- Lunsford, A.A. (1995) *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

- MacMahon, B. (1998) 'Women, Men and Politeness by Janet Holmes', (review article) *Language and Literature*. 7 3 276-279.
- Maltz, D. and Borker, R.A. (1982) 'A Cultural Approach to Male-female Miscommunication', in Gumperz, J. (ed) (1982b), 196-216.
- May, T. E. (1989) *Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*. London: Butterworths.
- McConnell-Ginet, S., Borker, R. and Nelly, F. (eds) (1980) *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- McDougall, L. (1997) *Westminster Women*. London: Vintage.
- McDowell, J.H. (1985) 'Verbal Dueling', in Dijk.T.A.-van. (ed) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis: (III) Discourse and Dialogue*. London: Academic Press. 203-211.
- McElhinny, B. (1995) 'Challenging hegemonic masculinities: female and male police officers handling domestic violence', in Hall, K. and Bulcholtz, M. (eds), *Gender Articulated: language and the socially constructed self*. London: Routledge. 217-44.
- McElhinny, B. (1998) ' "I don't smile much any more": Affect, gender, and the discourse of Pittsburgh police officers', in Coates, J. (ed), 309-327.
- McFadden, J. and Lazarowicz, M. (2000) *The Scottish Parliament: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd.
- McMillan, J.R., Clifton, A.K., McGrath, D. and Gale, W.S. (1977) 'Women's language: uncertainty or interpersonal sensitivity and emotionality?', *Sex Roles*. 3 543-559.
- McRae, K. (1997) 'Contrasting styles of decision-making: adversarial vs Consensual Politics', *International Political Science Review*. 18 3 279-295.
- Miller, W.L. (1999) 'Modified rapture all round: the first elections to the Scottish Parliament', *Government and Opposition*. 34 3 299-322.
- Mills, S. (1995) *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London and New York: Longman.
- Mills, S. (1997) *Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Mitchell, J. (1998) 'What could a Scottish parliament do?'. *Regional and Federal Studies*. 8 1 68-85.

- Mitchell, J. (2000) 'New parliament, new politics in Scotland', *Parliamentary Affairs*. 53 3 605-621.
- Moerman, M. (1988) *Talking Culture: Ethnography and Conversation Analysis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mulkay, M. (1988) *On Humour*. London: Polity Press.
- Nanov-Schwehr, K. (1988) *Recurrent Intonation Patterns in the Kennedy/Nixon Debates*. Tübingen, West Germany: Gunter Narr.
- Nielsen, J. M. (1990) *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Norris, P. and Lovenduski, J. (1995) *Political Recruitment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (1996) 'Women Politicians: Transforming Westminster?', in Lovenduski, J. and Norris, P. (eds), 91-104.
- Norton, P. (ed) (1990) *Legislatures*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Norton, P. (1993) *Does Parliament Work?* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Nownes, A. J. and Freeman, P.K. (1998) 'Female Lobbyists: Women in the world of 'Good Ol' Boys'', *The Journal of Politics*. 60 4 1181-1201.
- Oakley, A. (1974) *The Sociology of Housework*. London: Martin Robertson.
- Oakley, A. (1982) 'Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms?', in Roberts, H. (ed) *Doing Feminist Research*. London: Routledge. 30-61.
- Oakley, A. (2000) *Experiments in Knowing: Gender and Method in the Social Sciences*. Milton Keynes, Open University with Polity Press.
- O'Barr, W. and Atkins, B.K. (1980) 'Women's language or powerless language?', in McConnell-Ginet, S., Borker, R. and Furman, N. (eds) 93-110.
- Ochs (1992) 'Indexing Gender', in Duranti, A. and Goodwin, C. (eds) *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. 335-58.
- Osmond, J.(ed) (1995) *A Parliament for Wales*. Dyfed: Gomer Press.
- Pizzini, F. (1991) 'Communication hierarchies in humour: gender differences in the obstetrical/gynaecological setting', *Discourse and Society*. 2 477-488.

- Potter, J. (1996) 'Discourse analysis and constructionist approaches: theoretical background' in Richardson, J.T.E. (ed) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods*. Leicester: BPI.
- Potter, J. and Edwards, D. (2001) 'Sociolinguistics, cognitivism and discursive psychology' in Coupland, N., Sarangi, S. and Candlin, C.N. (eds), *Sociolinguistics and Social Theory*. London: Longman. 88-104.
- Potter, J. and Wetherall, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Poulakos, T. (1993) *Rethinking the History of Rhetoric*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Power, G. (2001) (ed) *Under Pressure: Are we getting the most from our MPs?*. London: Hansard Society.
- Puwar, N. (1997a) 'Reflections on interviewing women MPs', *Sociological Research Online*. 2:1.
<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/1/4.html>.
- Puwar, N. (1997b) 'Gender and political elites: women in the House of Commons', *Sociology Review*. Nov. 2-6.
- Reinharz, S. (1992) *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ribbens, J. and Edwards, R. (1998) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives*. London: Sage.
- Richardson, J.T.E. (ed) (1996) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods*. Leicester: BPS Books.
- Rose, R. (1989) *Politics in England: Change and Persistence*. London: MacMillan.
- Sacks, H. (1992) *Lectures on Conversation*. Vol I and II. G. Jefferson (ed). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A. and Jefferson, G. (1974) 'A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation', *Language*. 50 696-735.
- Saville-Troike, M. (1982) *The Ethnography of Communication*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Saville-Troike, M. (1997) 'The Ethnographic Analysis of Communicative Events', in Coupland, N. and Jaworski A. (eds) *Sociolinguistics*. New York and London: Macmillan. 126-144.

- Schiffrin, D. (1987) *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schiffrin, D. (1994) *Approaches to Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Seaton, J. and Winetrobe, B.K. (1999) 'Modernising the Commons', *The Political Quarterly*. 152-160.
- Seiter, J.S. (1999) 'Does communicating non-verbal disagreement during an opponent's speech affect the credibility of the debater in the background?', *Psychological Reports*. 84 3 1 855-861.
- Short, C. (1996) 'Women and the Labour party', in Lovenduski, J. and Norris, P. (eds), 19-27.
- Shotter, J. and Gergen, K. (1994) 'Inquiries in social constructionism'. in T.R. Sarbin, T.R. and Kituse, J.I. (eds) *Constructing the Social*. London: Sage. 1-15.
- Shugart, M. S. and Carey, J.M. (1992) *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sinclair, J. and Coulthard, M. (1975) *Towards an Analysis of Spoken Discourse: The English Used by Pupils and Teachers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Slembrouk, S. (1992) 'The Parliamentary 'verbatim' report: the written construction of spoken discourse', *Language and Literature*. 1 2 101-119 London: Longman.
- Smith, D. (1990) *Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, C.F. and Gray, P. (1999) '[Re] shaping parliamentary democracy in the information age', *Parliamentary Affairs*. 52 3 429-441.
- Smith-Lovin, L. and Charles, B. (1989) 'Interruptions in group discussions: the effects of gender and group composition', *American Sociological Review*. 54 424-35.
- Solheim, B.O. (2000) *On Top of the World: Women's Political Leadership in Scandinavia*. Wesport CT: Greenwood Press.
- Spender, D. (1980) *Man Made Language*. London: Routledge.
- Spradley, J.P. (1979) *The Ethnographic Interview*. London: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

- Sreberny-Mohammadi, A. and Ross, K. (1996) 'Women MPs and the media: representing the body politic', in Lovenduski, J. and Norris, P. (eds), 105-117.
- Stacey, J. (1988) 'Can there be a feminist ethnography?', *Women's Studies International Forum*. 11 21-27.
- Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1983, 1993) *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Stanley, L. (1990) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory, and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Stephenson, M. (1998) *The Glass Trapdoor: Women, Politics and the Media during the 1997 General Election*. London: The Fawcett Society.
- Stokoe, E. and Smithson, J. (2001) 'Making gender relevant: conversation analysis and gender categories in interaction', *Discourse and Society*. 12 2 217-244.
- Swann, J. (1989) 'Talk Control: An illustration from the classroom of problems in analysing male dominance of conversation', in Coates, J. and Cameron, D. (eds), 123-40.
- Tamale, S. (2000) "'Point of Order Mr Speaker": African women claiming their space in parliament', *Gender and Development*. 8 3 8-25
- Tannen, D. (1984) *Conversational Style: Analysing talk among friends*. Norwood, N.J: Ablex.
- Tannen, D. (1986) *That's not what I meant!: How conversational style makes or breaks your relations with others*. New York: William Morrow.
- Tannen, D. (1990) *You Just Don't Understand! Women and Men in Conversation*. London: Virago.
- Tannen, D. (1993) 'The relativity of linguistic strategies: rethinking power and solidarity in gender and dominance', in Tannen, D. (ed), *Gender in Conversational Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 165-88.
- Tannen, D. (1994) *Gender and Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1997) 'Gender and language in the workplace', in Wodak, R. (ed) *Gender and Discourse*. London: Sage. 81-105.
- Taylor, B. (1999) *The Scottish Parliament*. Edinburgh: Polygon, Edinburgh University Press.
- Ten Have, P. (1999) *Doing Conversation Analysis*. London: Sage.

- Thomas, S. (1994) *How Women Legislate*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thorne, B., Kramarae, C and Henley, N. (eds) (1983) *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Toren, C. (1996) 'Ethnography: Theoretical Background', in Richardson, J.T.E. (ed), 102-112.
- Toren, N., and Kraus, V. (1987) 'The effects of minority size on women's position in academia', *Social Forces*. 65 1090-1100.
- Troemel-Ploetz, S. (1985) 'Women's conversational culture: rupturing patriarchal discourse', ROLIG-papir 36, Roskilde Universitetscenter, Denmark.
- Troemel-Ploetz, S. (1991). Review Essay: 'Selling the apolitical. *Discourse and Society*. 2 4 489-502.
- Uchida, A. (1992) 'When 'difference' is 'dominance': A critique of the 'anti-power-based' cultural approach to sex differences', *Language in Society* 21 547-568.
- Walsh, C. (2000) *Gender, Discourse and the Public Sphere*. Unpublished Thesis: Sheffield Hallam University.
- Walsh, C. (2001) *Gender and Discourse: Language and Power in Politics, the Church and Organisations*. London: Longman.
- Webster, W. (1990) *Not a Man to Match Her*. London: Women's Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- West, C. (1984) 'When the Doctor is a 'lady'', *Symbolic Interaction*. 7 1 87-106.
- West, C. (1990) 'Not just 'doctor's orders': Directive-response sequences in patients' visits to women and men physicians', *Discourse and Society*. 1 1 85-112.
- West, C. and Zimmerman, D.H. (1987) 'Doing Gender'. *Gender and Society* 1 125-51.
- Williams, P.M. (1980) 'Interviewing politicians: the life of Hugh Gaitskell', *Political Quarterly*. 51 3 303-316.
- Wilson, J. (1990) *Politically Speaking: The Pragmatic Analysis of Political Language*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wodak, Ruth (ed) (1996) *Disorders of Discourse*. London: Longman.
- Wodak, Ruth (ed) (1997) *Gender and Discourse*. London: Sage.

- Wolf, D. (ed) (1996) *Dilemmas in Fieldwork*. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Woods, Nicola (1989) 'Talking shop: sex and status as determinants of floor apportionment in a work setting', in Coates, J. and Cameron, D. (eds), 141-57.
- Yoder, J. (1991) 'Re-thinking Tokenism: Looking beyond numbers', *Gender and Society*. 5 178-92.
- Zetter, L. (ed) (1998) *PMS Parliamentary Companion, No. 34*. London: PMS Publications.
- Zetter, L. (ed) (1999) *PMS Parliamentary Companion, No. 38*. London: PMS Publications.
- Zetter, L. (ed) (2000) *PMS Parliamentary Companion, No. 42*. London: PMS Publications.
- Zetter, L. (ed) (2001) *PMS Parliamentary Companion, No. 46*. London: PMS Publications.
- Zimmer, L. (1988) 'Tokenism and women in the workplace: The limits of gender-neutral theory', *Social Problems*. 35 1 64-77.
- Zimmerman, D. and West, C. (1975) 'Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation', in Thorne, B. and Henley, N. (eds) *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, MA; Newbury House. 105-29.

Other Sources

House of Commons Public Information Office Factsheets

No. 5 : Women in the House

No.21: The Speaker of the House of Commons

No.40: Broadcasting Proceedings of the House of Commons

No.46: Questions

Report of the Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament (1999), The Scottish Office: <http://www.Scotland.gov.uk/library>

Guide for Visitors to the Galleries (House of Commons Public Information Office)

Scottish Parliament Public Information Office (Standing Orders and Parliament Buildings) www.scottish.parliament.uk

Guide to the Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber (Scottish Parliament Information Office)

**Appendix One: Women MPs elected to the House of Commons in General
Elections 1918-1997**

Date	Con.	Lab	Lib*	SDP#	Other	Speaker	Total
1918					1		1
1922	1		1				2
1923	3	3	2				8
1924	3	1					4
1929	3	9	1		1		14
1931	13		1		1		15
1935	6	1	1		1		9
1945	1	21	1		1		24
1950	6	14	1				21
1951	6	11					17
1955	10	14					24
1959	12	13					25
1964	11	18					29
1966	7	19					26
1970	15	10			1		26
1974 Feb	9	13			1		23
1974 Oct	7	18			2		27
1979	8	11					19
1983	13	10					23
1987	17	21	1	1	1		41
1992	20	37	2		1		60
1997	13	101	3		2	1	120

*From March 1988, Social and Liberal Democrat, and from October 1989, Liberal Democrat.

From June 1990, Social Democrat.

Source of data: House of Commons factsheet No.5: *Women in the House of Commons*.

Appendix Two: Interview Transcripts

Transcription scheme for interviews.

IN = first and second name initials of MP

Q = Questions and comments made by the interviewer

“ ” = reported speech

(laughs) = paralinguistic or contextual information

[-----] = indicates that ‘off the record’ comments have been removed

Interview Transcript A

Interview information

Date: 25/03/99

Duration: 55 minutes

Location: MP’s office in the House of Commons.

Other people present: Two assistants at their desks.

Start Time: 10.10 End Time: 11.05

Interviewee Information

Name: Wished to remain anonymous.

Position/party: Labour backbencher.

Date first elected: May 1997

Notes:

Before the interview started the new Scottish Parliament was discussed, and the possibility of it being less adversarial than the Westminster chamber mentioned. The tape recorder was started just the interviewee states that a consensual style in parliament can be ‘very boring’.

Transcript:

1MP: the problem is well that’s right sometimes it can be very boring you have to have a robust chamber but one that is at the same time you still have the engaging of ideas and not going too far the other way you know and not being overly polite

5Q: What is your experience of speaking in the House of Commons

MP: um er it’s it’s it’s incredibly daunting er I think not just because not just because of who is there if you’ve been interested in politics for most of your life then half your heroes are in there um and so that in itself is daunting but also the knowledge that it is also taped and that it is also or possibly also

10 going out live on the TV as well em and the eyes of the place are on you so from that point of view it is incredibly daunting it is getting easier but that’s two years in the other thing that makes it very difficult is the arcane language and that is what makes you stumble it does not trip off the tongue easily and ‘my Honourable Friend the member for Inverness Nairn and Lochaber’ or as

15 I said last time I called him ‘My Right Honourable Friend’ and I’m relaxed enough that I can now stop and laugh that I’ve just given him a promotion but the sort of standard responses which you are expected ‘I thank my Right Honourable Friend for that matter’ and remember the Right Honourable as opposed to Honourable Friend or Member or Gentleman or Lady that takes a

20 lot of practice before that comes anywhere near naturally um and so initially
 it's um er it sounds slanted it sounds stilted and much of what was written
 about um well we I suppose they were going to call us clones anyway but the
 fact that we appeared the new Members if you think that more than a third or
 parliament were completely new and it appeared as though we were just
 25 reading a script was essentially because that's essentially what we had to do
 in order to get the correct form of address there because you would not er if
 you didn't you wouldn't remember it or you'd get it wrong and it would be
 that would stumble you and it then makes you totally inarticulate because
 you can't then remember what else you're saying um that was the hardest
 30 thing to get used to and I'm still not quite um used to that it still doesn't
 naturally trip off the tongue um how you make it natural is very very difficult
 and I think there will be some people in the House that will never ever make
 that sound as though that's coming from them

Q: Right why do you think that is

35MP: Well because it's arcane you know in normal speech you don't

Q: Right but what sort of people wouldn't

MP: Er well people maybe don't ones who are not the most confident of speakers
 anyway um people assume that you have to be a confident speaker to be a
 politician but you don't necessarily because the skills of a politician

40 unless you want to you are aiming for high office it is slightly different if you
 are aiming for high office then you've got speeches and you're delivering
 government policy but if you're an ordinary constituency MP then the skills
 are actually the interpersonal skills of speaking to people one-to-one um um
 doing the job having an empathy for your constituents not about great oratory

45 um although there will be people in the House of Commons who are great
 orators but if we want um er a House of Commons or any parliament to
 reflect its society then we can't all be great orators we can't all be that I don't
 think it is necessarily an essential skill in being a good politician and if it was
 I think it would deny some of the very good politicians the chance to to to

50 shine but they are just not necessarily going to shine within the chamber

Q: Right that's really interesting er did you get any training

MP: For speaking

Q: Yes

MP: Um not in the House of Commons but I'm an ex English teacher I was a

55 principal teacher of English and I also ran a debating teams so I used to teach
 it (laughs) so that was my own experience but the training we got as
 candidates was um very much on the media side and dealing with the media
 which again is quite a different style very much because it is much more
 intimate particularly TV and TV interviews are much more intimate and are

60 not again oratory I think there probably was I think the Labour Party maybe
 did offer at various conferences and particularly women's conferences they
 started to offer speech making but I would be on the other side really
 delivering it not the one receiving it because I'm a because of my own
 background

65Q: I see so how did you find your maiden speech for example

MP: Oh I really enjoyed it (laughs) once I got into it um once I got passed the
 initial nerves once I got the first laugh I like to have humour and I like people
 to laugh and it is not I that I tell jokes or anything it is very often a self-
 deprecating humour or it comes out of what I'm doing and er so once I

70 got the first laugh it then I relaxed into it and er I had it all written out the whole lot written out er

Q: Was that so you could practice it in advance

MP: Well I only wrote it that morning and er it's I a bit of a last minute-er when it comes to speeches and things so I have it it's it's sloshing around in my

75 head um probably for up to a week beforehand and then I get a shape or I get a hook and I get so it looks as if it will be full and then I'll write it all out um I sometimes then throw it all away again um I'll write it out especially if it's a timed one especially if it's a conference speech to do which is three minutes or five minutes which is nothing then I'll write it all out to get the

80 wording right because I have a tendency to verbosity so I um so I go off at tangents and I have my own idiosyncratic style I suppose and I go off at tangents and come back but I know if it is a three minute speech that I have to make one serious point in then I will tightly craft it

85Q: You've talked about your style and mentioned humour can you unpack it a little more than that

MP: Er yeah it's simple I keep things simple and er I think the art of great speech making is taking very complex ideas and making it simple not simplistic but simple so that anybody can understand it's a self-evident truth I hope my

90 audience think that's easy to understand um sometimes I have an unusual way of looking at things to try and root out not quite the use of metaphor let me think but analogy um examples I like to talk in pictures and I use my own experience a lot I'm very anecdotal in all of my speeches um very anecdotal to the extent that it may seem very very simple because it is anecdotal it is

95 about someone I've met or something that's happened to me or something that has happened to my family but if I can't connect the big affairs of state into ordinary people's lives then I wonder why I am here

Q: Do you get the impression that that is true of speakers in general

MP: No I'm unusual

100Q: Do you think that more people should speak like that

MP: well I think so but I would say that (laughs) because that's what I do er it depends I am not a great intellect and it is no use pretending that I am and I'm not going to have any great intellectual insights I'll have human insights I hope I'm much more on the human side um well I'd like to think I do I

105 don't know if I do

Q: That's interesting I wonder whether in the very adversarial sort of power orientated arena whether it's not seen as er um not weak exactly but er

MP: Oh it is it is I'm sure it is but that doesn't bother me

Q: Because that's not your agenda

110MP: well partly because of my gender I think they'll think that of you anyway because you are female and I think females have different styles anyway but also I'm confident you know I've done it before I've been there I've been the teacher um so I can I can rationalise it and analyse it so I don't care and and and I'm I'm not going to as I say I'm not going to be a a I'm trying to think

115 I'm not going to be a Tony Benn in his heyday so I'm er er there's no point of pretending or thinking that I might be but giving anecdotes gives you much more to say because there's only so many times you can say the one thing you know um and how else do you get the example and you can go to the library and you can get all the statistics you like I rarely use statistics I

120 rarely use them but I notice a lot of my male colleagues always bamboozle
with statistics um you know they've gone to the library they've got the stuff
but you know anybody can read that out but it's what does that mean for
people for ordinary people or anybody as to the individual as to the group of
people that it is applied to and that is what I have to do and I will I'll read all
125 the research and stuff but I then have to absorb it and make it my own but as
a result I can't get anyone else to write my speeches I have to I have to do it
myself they can my researcher here will do all the research for me and will
give me th these are the main issues but I then go off and er work on how to
present it

130Q: Right I see that's interesting er if you could characterise a women's
style of speaking you said you thought that existed what would you think it
would be apart from anecdotal

MP:um less hectoring we tend not to hector but I think it can be just as equally
forceful and in fact I think it can be very often be quite emotional you know

135 again a well-told anecdotal story can have people with a lump in their throat
and the tears in their eyes and I think I think women can often do that and
women if they're good will drop their voice and will bury their voice um you
may not get the high passion in the same way um you know when I was
growing up I say growing up I was in my twenties but when I got involved in
140 the the Labour and Trade Union movement I would see a lot of trade union
leaders (TELEPHONE RINGS) Sorry
(Interruption Lasts for 5 minutes)

Q: earlier you mentioned barracking and er it seems that it is split between men
and women can you tell me anything about that

145MP: um yeah no I don't barrack but I will intervene now because I've got
the confidence to do it I was doing it at the Scottish Grant committee on
Monday which was a much more intimate one it was the last meeting of the
Scottish Grant Committee which will probably not exist after the Scottish
Parliament is set up it is a meeting that is held every four to six weeks which
150 of just Scottish MPs and er the last few have been in Edinburgh so it is quite
an intimate um gathering because there are only seventy-two Scottish MPs
and half of Labour ones are Government Ministers (laughs) so they're never
there so (laughs) so they um and we all know one another quite well from all
parties so I felt much more relaxed er it's it's big in the Scottish media but

160 not anybody else and in that one you're I was trying to I was intervening
Malcolm Bruce who wouldn't give way and my colleague was saying 'Give
way' 'Give way' you know (laughs) they were shouting because to give way
and um he eventually gave way to me and er Alec Salmond who wouldn't
give way either now that was interesting because that was these are the two
165 main spokespeople for the respective parties and I'm a woman and they
didn't give way to me and er I don't know whether that's because I'm an
irrelevant you know I don't know whether I would love to think it's because
it is because they were frightened I was going to come up with such a
stunning intervention and floor them but I think you know that I'm not

170 important

Q: Do you think that asking someone to give way is used strategically

MP:Oh yeah it is used often to put people off the the the you know the point of
order is different because that's when you're actually asking the Speaker for
a ruling in schools debating there's always a point of information and it is

175 part of the debating style and the ability to be able to pick up those is actually
is very is crucial it is a debating chamber it is not a speech making chamber
and the difference between and this is my my background coming out and
my schools background and I I I wasn't very keen on coaching speech-
making teams er because I thought they were a wee bit false because a lot of
180 it was play-acting but I was very successful in doing debating teams because
it is interactive and it is the ability to think on your feet to change your
argument in the light of what other people are saying and to and to reflect the
debate and that's great fun and if it's done well it's er er great fun

Q: But presumably it must be quite difficult to ask someone to give way if they
185 are as you say great stars of politics er is it more difficult

MP: well you tend to be asking people on the opposition who you don't you
don't rate and when you are doing something like that one of my Scottish
colleagues had a Private Member's Bill two weeks ago and so there was a
small group of us in and er and we were intervening on one another because
190 we had to keep it going and that was er sort of friendly intervention so er you
can give a supportive intervention er er if you notice that someone's what
you often happens if it is a more adversarial because it is not always like that
if you get all party support in some Private Member's Bill it was great it was
lovely it was really nice and um

195Q: What day was that

MP: Two Fridays ago the thirteenth of March I think it was when you read it it'll
be awful because I didn't know anything I was just padding out um but um

Q: Was that the first private Member's Bill this session

MP: No it was the week after that it was the Mental Health Scotland Act I wasn't
200 down for the first week it was the Scottish Labour Party conference that
week so I wasn't there but I had actually promised Eric because he's on my
committee that I'd support him in his Private Member's Bill so there's that
there's that camaraderie there and there is quite a bit of that which people
don't see because what we are in the chamber is a game it is absolutely a

205 game

Q: Is that cross party camaraderie as well

MP: Yes there is there is to a certain extent

Q: so you'll have a chat with someone of an opposite party before a debate

MP: yes that's right I was speaking to John Swinney who is the Treasury

210 spokesperson of the SNP just as he's coming through the Members' lobby
there and I'll be saying 'Hello John how are you doing fine' you know and
then I've just discovered he's been on the radio this morning saying that
Donald Dewar should be resigning (laughs) you know er um

Q: But it can be quite nasty can't it

215MP: Aye they can but again that doesn't again that doesn't necessarily
mean across the parties that could be within your own party um and some of
the real nastiness can be in your own party

Q: Just to move back to the subject of barracking if women don't barrack do
they have an equivalent noise or way of expressing disapproval

220MP: you see I don't know if it is the voice that the if there is barracking
going on at Prime Minister's Question Time and there's a female voice you
hear it separately you can't make out what they're saying so it sounds shrill
and I think that is the problem because everyone else is covered by the other
voices and so they join in and there are only actually probably and there are

225 actually probably only five or six people that will shout out the funny
comments but then everyone the others all then pick it up

Q: And there's a general level of cheering

MP: Yes that's right and I now do the 'hear hear' which I suppose I didn't do at
all to start with which is a question of confidence I suppose confidence of

230 being part of the game I think and you it is very easy to get caught up in the
whole atmosphere but then that's what makes this a great parliament as well
is that if you keep that atmosphere and the 'hear hear-ing' and the you know
and the part of that we have to keep which otherwise it would be like some of
the European parliaments which are just deadly dull er I can't remember er

235 we were in the Munich parliament last year and they came in and they had
their mobile phones and their newspapers and they were sitting doing their
mail and the guy was speaking and nobody was listening to him erm it was
just awful erm it was just not debating at all whereas when you're in the
chamber there you can't take your newspapers in you can't read you can't

240 write you are engaged well you see it would be boring otherwise and when
there's half a dozen folk in the chamber it would be deadly dull and boring
so to liven it up you start intervening because that keeps you engaged and
that keeps you awake and that's good that can be quite good

Q: Although of course that is technically breaking the rules isn't it

245MP: Well of course you are not recognised by the chair unless you are
standing but I might have broken that rule (laughs) because I'm sitting in my
chair all the time and I've also actually broken the one where you have to be
behind the red line but I sit across it quite a few people actually do put their
foot across the line if you're actually on that bench you can see when they

250 step out but they are never going to be able to use that as a procedural device
because I would always be out of order so if they tried it it would be
interesting to see whether it was sustained or not

Q: So have you ever seen someone silenced by barracking or what has it been
like at its most intimidating

255MP: Er um well I'm just trying to think if I can remember any examples um
because the worst barracking is for people who are in cabinet who are the
Minister and are probably um already used to it um I'm trying to think of any
of the debates where there's been a backbencher yeah I think it's happened I
wouldn't say completely silence but what's happened to a number of my

260 female colleagues particularly is that they get you know they get put off what
they're saying they shout 'reading' at them now the one I'm thinking of um
um most recently was er I think Julia Drown I think was number one in
Prime Minister's Question Time and that was just a few weeks ago and she
asked quite a complicated question I think on third world debt I'm not very

265 sure which she's obviously written down for herself er um so she kept
looking down at her papers it was quite a long question which is always a
mistake in these these things anyway and the other side started barracking
'reading' at her now what hurt her wasn't that because she got through that
alright but Simon Hoggart who's doing the sketch up in the gallery and they

270 they said just another clone reading out a sycophantic question the question
wasn't he hadn't listened to a single word she had said he was merely
reacting to the barracking from the Tories that she was reading so he hadn't
even taken in what she said and she felt now that that's now in the papers
you know which is damaging and that happens to us a lot as women erm we

275 give one question and we're accused of the um the men do it established men
do it and and and there is a dual standard applied there I also remember it
happening I think it was to Jane Griffiths but I'm not very sure

Q: Yes I know about that one

MP: And in that case as soon as the barracking starts you just don't know what
280 the hell because you don't know what's happening now she's not the only
one it's happened to one of the men as well now I don't know but he
constructed the question wrong as well and it's always somebody who is new
and you know I could see the Speaker the Speaker's face was willing her to
get it out we were all willing her to get it out but the other side of course it's
285 it's they scented blood that's why the first time you ask a question you have
to write it down but then you get barracked for reading you know so you try
to make sure that you've got it all watertight so you have it there you have
your security blanket of it written down but you still get the barracking so
you can't win essentially you can't win you're damned if you do you're

290 damned if you don't

Q: But why do they care so much if you are reading surely that's acceptable and
sensible so you don't forget what you're saying

MP: Well it's all part of it's all part of the media hype of the the you know the
government's having these planted questions and all of that so it fulfils that

295 stereotype that the government have the media have because it's because
you're reading it so it's not your own words that's why you're reading it but
what it actually means is that someone doesn't quite have the confidence or
who got it wrong last time and who wants to make sure belt and braces this
time it's just confidence it's just practise it's a safety net I don't take notes in
300 with me because I know I'll look at it if it's there but that's again through
years of experience and there was somebody else who got half way through
their question and then just couldn't er I think that was a man so it happens
to men as well as women and I think you know and I think and I sit along the
front bench you see so there's comments constantly all the time so I can't

305 hear what anyone else says so I've got all of them speaking in Prime
Minister's Questions they are all speaking or shouting and things and they'll
say oh if they'd worded that better it wouldn't have sounded so sycophantic
you and er um or why did they allow themselves to be used in that way and
so that's from my own side they're saying that but no matter what you do

310 because I think I remember being I was one of the ones named in er the New
Statesman as asking a sycophantic question and what I actually ended up
doing was embarrassing the Prime Minister so he ended up being made a
fool of in the front pages of the Scottish papers the next morning because of
the way he'd answered it but you know yet they just assumed that you must

315 have whether you do or not and it's not you know and my my style is that I
have to write it myself and I can't take it from someone else but that's not to
say I couldn't get an idea from someone else but it has to still follow that
particular form and if you don't follow the form then you get you get
criticised for not following the form so you're damned if you do and you're

320 damned if you don't and it's a skill a real skill of asking a question of your
side which is not going to embarrass them but that doesn't sound as if you
are planting a soft question but there is a skill to doing that but you do you do
do it and you do it by putting words like 'demand' in 'and I demand that the
Prime Minister goes further' it is play-acting really and some people are

325 better at it than others

Q: Have you noticed any strategies to deal with barracking

MP: Well I think it is confidence for example treating barracking as if it is a request to give way is one way around it but I've only started to get interventions I I the first two or three times I spoke nobody interrupted me

Q: So do you think that's a mark of respect if you get intervened upon

330MP: No I think they were just frightened of me well not of me but of the wheelchair they they didn't want to appear to be barracking the poor cripple to put it as bluntly as that I'm fairly sure that's the reason but they know me now so they will um now they know I can take it and I can be funny the last time I was speaking at Prime Minister's questions I started off with a joke

335 because there was myself if you read Hansard it doesn't make sense but myself and Betty Williams who was coming back in a wheelchair who has had a back operation and she's temporarily in a wheelchair so for the first time we were both sitting in the chamber in wheelchairs and er all the various things were going through my head you know we've turned this parliament

340 into the round or you see we're cloning you know and er now I'm secure in my disability so I can make the cripple jokes against myself but that takes thirty years before you reach that stage so I said to Betty 'this is what I'm thinking of saying it that okay' and she said that's fine so I said 'as you see Madam Speaker there are so many of us on the government benches that

345 more of us have taken to bringing in our own seats' (laughs) so you know the place erupted with that but and once they start laughing I'm quite you see I like the laughter I enjoy the laughter other people find it off-putting and then I said I don't suppose I was wanting to ask something about the oil prices oh well actually because we're into election mode with the SNP in Scotland so I 350 wanted to mention oil prices so I I said I don't suppose that my Right Honourable Friend will have seen this morning's edition of the Aberdeen Journal and I have one of our side behind me shouting 'and if not why not' (Laughs) but I enjoyed that I didn't feel threatened by it I felt that that he was supporting me in the humour and it became the the the so they were all

355 laughing I got my pop in at the SNP so they were then all cheering at the end of it so it was actually working an audience erm now it was a sycophantic as any question but it didn't appear to be because it was actually it was criticising the you know and I wish I these things pop into your head and they come out and sometimes things will come out of my mouth before they

360 actually have run past my brain

Q: So for you an intervention on your own speech is a mark of acceptance

MP:that's right and they now happen they haven't happened in any of the big debates erm I haven't actually spoken all that often in the chamber you know I feel I should be speaking more but there always seem to be other things to

365 do you know but erm probably I don't give the chamber the respect that some of the older members do some of them think that the chamber is the be-all and end-all but a lot of the younger ones don't

Q: What do you think the function if debates are

MP:I think it is too much of a game it's posturing and you're not really changing 370 until you get the one that sticks out in my head is Anne Widdecombe's speech in the fox-hunting debate where we were clapping it was the second time we forgot ourselves and we were clapping you know and we were told

off by the speaker the first time was because we didn't know any better when Tony Blair came in the very first day and we all burst out into spontaneous
375 applause

Q: Do you think applause will catch on as a new response instead of barracking

MP: No I think I mean I understand the reason why again once you are actually down here you actually begin to realise there's a rationale behind the archaic stuff you know why we vote in the lobbies is so that you can nobble a

380 Minister and er you couldn't otherwise and er you think it's stupid if you're not here but you actually see the rational explanation and the 'hear hear' you can say 'hear hear' but there's a danger if you had clapping or whooping or whatever then that would be worse than that because you could then have orchestrated applause you know and various things and that becomes more

385 like a rally or a conference whereas the 'hear hear' at least limits it because all you can say is 'hear hear' you don't really have the breath to sustain it but there's always the response when Paddy Ashdown 'er er'

Q: What's that

MP: Every time Paddy Ashdown stands up it's ('makes grunting noise') and it's
390 the yawning you know oh no bor-ing (laughs) the first time he stood up after he announced his retirement as soon as he stood up there was a whole crowd behind me shouting 'bye bye' (laughs) I mean I can't hear what they say I can only hear the barracking because I'm not sitting on the green benches so I'm just hearing the barracking half the time the folk sitting beside me

395 they're all laughing like drains so I say 'what did he say' they don't have a clue either they're just laughing like drains because everyone else is it's quite good fun in a way and it's quite easy to get caught up in it and the people who get caught up in it are the very ones that are criticising the new ones for being clones or being sycophantic um um this won't be published will it um

400 no I can tell the story so long as it doesn't cos I don't like criticising my colleagues but um the [name removed]¹ who did the speech where he called us all Stepford wives I presume you know about that um so of course the press and the media were on to us the next day saying what do you think about your colleague calling you a Stepford wife and things like that and I

405 refused to comment and so they said well because I'm not in the business of criticising my colleagues I just don't do it you know because that would mean I was doing the same as him

Q: So who are the Stepford wives

MP: well I don't know I mean they phoned the people they know who have a high
410 profile in the Scottish papers they phone me because I'm the one they know and they use me quite a bit um so they were looking for a comment on [name removed] but maybe they do think I'm a Stepford wife I don't know you don't know how people judge you but um so as I say I wouldn't say anything in the press but a couple of weeks later he said we were sitting in Prime

415 Minister's Questions and he was sitting on the front bench just along from where I am and when everyone else was doing that (mimics waving the order paper) and when everybody else was shouting he was doing that (mimics waving the order paper) he was you know Pavlov's dogs complete Pavlov's dogs the reaction along the benches is Pavlov's dogs erm who starts it we

¹ The interviewee refers to a labour male backbench MP

420 don't know just it is spontaneous and then everyone joins in and he's doing that now that's much more of the the people who aren't doing that oh sorry this doesn't show on the tape that I'm waving my order paper or pointing to the other side you know they've got an awful habit of putting their arm out and pointing to the other side the women don't do that I've never seen

425 women do that I've never seen women shaking their order papers always the men who do that and yet and yet it is the women who are called the Stepford wives yet they're the ones that are behaving like Pavlov's dogs but I don't want it to look as if I'm criticising my colleagues but that's true on both sides you know that's not a party political point that's purely a male/female

430 difference but I also believe very strongly that as women we have to hold our nerve against all of that against all the stuff and I won't react to the accusations of the clones and all the other accusations we've had because we're doing things differently and we know we're doing things differently

Q: How are you doing things differently

435MP: Well because we're not joining in the Pavlov's dogs we're not joining in the barracking it's very often by what we're not doing and that doesn't mean to say that we're stooges or that we're that we can't take you know there's always that position you know if you can't take the heat then get out of the kitchen all of that and it's in these situations that we have to hold our

440 nerve and not turn into the men

Q: So it's a very conscious thing

MP: Well I don't know if it's a conscious thing I think it's a conscious thing of the press who are continually continually niggling so the barracking is not just in the chamber the nasty stuff the real nasty stuff is the press and what

445 the press say about us the fact that we can't think for ourselves we've had the biggest variety of single-minded women in this place ever and yet they have to think of some way to bring us down to undermine us and I've got quite a feminist argument coming out I wouldn't go so far as to say it's a male plot but because we won't behave like the men therefore it is not a valid way of

450 behaving therefore it must be because we're stooges or whatever and that's where it is very important and it is very difficult not to get caught up in it all because the easy way is to behave like they are but to say no there's a different way of doing it equally robust equally enjoyable equally with the banter but not about being nasty or vicious or trying to put people off that is

455 not debating erm yes I want to try and floor them in their arguments but I don't want to undermine them as an individual I want to it's about challenging their ideas not challenging the person

Q: Do you think that will change things eventually

MP: I don't think it will down here for a long time because I think gradually we'll
460 be sucked into behaving in the way that they behave here you know because that's what they want the establishment the establishment is so difficult I'm hoping that we've got the critical mass to do it I hope we do but I don't know

Q: Are there any women's groups in parliament which meet about these issues

MP: No not that I know of I very rarely get along to the parliamentary women's
465 group but I don't know if the groups of women talk I'm not sure there's still the separation of the women members' ladies' room the one next door but because I have this office here I tend not to be sitting in that but some people might there may be groups who do to talk about it but I tend to when I meet people like you

470Q: Because there was a lot of rhetoric about change after the 1997 election wasn't there

MP: But we have changed the place has changed it is an interesting place because it changes so slowly people don't notice it's changed but there has been quite a dramatic change in the place the whole atmosphere is different erm um I

475 don't know what it was like before but from speaking to people who were here before there is a difference before it is much more approachable I mean I had my new secretary down from Aberdeen last week who had never been to London before forty seven and the thing that amazed her was just how friendly people were you know the camaraderie I mean the person who said
480 it was different is Jim Wallace from the Liberal Democrats and I said 'Is it different Jim' and he said oh he said 'yes it really is' and I've also said about the barracking issue it's not just a feminist issue it's not just about women because it puts good men off as well if you are a man who doesn't fit that mould then it's just as likely to put you off and in fact it's harder for them

485 because they're regarded as weak because they're letting their sex down as well we can stand up and say that we're doing it differently because we're women but it's much harder for the man not to do it the way all the other men do because that is seen as being weak

Q: Do you think that that message that we're doing it differently because we're
490 women is getting across

MP: No the only way that we'd get it is if the press picked it up and they don't and women journalists are worse than the male journalists because they have to prove that they have balls and they can criticise us and that they're not so um and as I say the hurtful stuff there are people who have been in the
495 chamber and have been embarrassed but you live through that but the hurtful stuff is the stuff in the press which goes out and once it's in one newspaper it's then picked up and repeated the lie if you like is repeated the misrepresentation is then becomes a story and there can be things about you in the files which are simply not true and they can keep cropping up in every
500 other story that's written about you because the journalists are essentially very lazy and they just go to the files and I have articles that I don't even recognise myself in and you know my mother's saying what on earth did you tell them that for and I say mother I didn't you know if they go to the files and go and pick out all the bits that are true then that's fine but if they go and
505 pick out all the bits that are not or that have got twisted each time or the worst ones are the ones where the sub-editor puts a headline on I had a headline in a women's magazine article about me that said 'sometimes I wanted to scream and shout at the unfairness of it all' about me I've never ever felt like that about my disability at all it's the antithesis of how I feel
510 about it because I don't want sympathy it's a wonderful opportunity and it's the opposite of anything I've ever said to anyone it's

Q: Are you aware of any sexual discrimination or sexism in the House

MP: I haven't found any towards me but as I say I think they're put off by the wheelchair as I say women are fair game but cripples aren't I'm using the
515 word derogatorily because that's the mentality of it um er Dawn Primarolo apparently in the last parliament had a hard time and I've seen her get a hard time because she's young and attractive and you know you get the tone it's what has she got to tell us about taxes because she's in the Treasury

Q: Are there women's topics

520MP: Well I would hope that there aren't it's interesting that Helen Liddel when she was doing the same job because she's much more robust and er Dawn's much quieter and stuff but you you have oh yes I do remember something with Dawn because the man the Tory I don't even know who all the Tories are but he was sitting on the front bench being rude I really cannot
 525 distinguish between them I recognise them as being a Tory but I don't know who they are I know all the women and I know them by name the men it's just a wall of suits and er whoever he was said 'stupid woman' across at Dawn er Dawn had answered a question now it was a question asked by an Ulster Unionist it must have been Treasury questions now the rule is that
 530 there's the initial question and if you come in on a supplementary then it has to be it has to refer to the original question and the Ulster Unionists have deliberately misinterpreted the original question so he gets a supplementary so his supplementary was nothing to do with the original question Dawn came back and re-iterated the answer she'd given before which of course
 535 wasn't the answer to his question but then his supplementary wasn't really about the topic and at that anyone with half a brain could see what was going on but this guy shouts 'stupid woman' and our side and I have to admit all the men as well all reacted that was one time I reacted I said that's disgraceful I think I shouted you know it was out of my mouth before you
 540 know it was the automatic reaction all of us shouted everyone else was saying 'that's disgraceful' the ones that are into the whole thing say 'withdraw' but I must say that's not in my mind I just reacted as a human being and said that's awful and you know there must have been fifty other people who reacted in the same way the Speaker hadn't heard but from our
 545 reaction she realised that he had said something that she hadn't heard what he's said and she asked the Right Honourable Gentleman to withdraw and he withdrew the comment but it was only picked up because of our reaction she hadn't heard it there was another time when someone accused me of being racist by the SNP they shouted and the Deputy Speaker claimed he didn't
 550 hear it but that was a battle between the SNP and the Labour party in Scotland and it was at a time when we were busy with the elections but er are you speaking to Jane Griffiths because I think she had some but it's Nicholas Soames that's the obnoxious one on the other side she said that someone was making gestures (of a woman's breasts) but then again you're damned if you
 555 do and damned if you don't so yes you have to accept it as part of the rough and tumble but there are some things which are not acceptable at all um and it's just judging which ones you can't accept and as I say the stupid woman comment to Dawn um was unacceptable but speak to Alice Mahon because she said that when Dawn was in opposition she started wearing trousers and
 560 stuff because they kept shouting at her 'show us your leg' and stuff so that was in the last parliament

Q: Could you suggest any other MPs I could contact

MP: Candy Atherton Jackie Ballard from the LibDems Hazel Blears Helen Brinton Anne Campbell Lynda Clark Geisla Stuart

565Q: How can I use this interview material

MP: I'd prefer it to be anonymous

Interview Ends

Interview Transcript B

Interview information

Date: 13/04/99

Duration: 45 minutes

Location: Bench in corridor off central lobby, House of Commons.

Other people present: Passing MPs

Start Time: 16.25 End Time: 17.10

Interviewee Information

Name: Jackie Ballard

Position/party: Senior Liberal Democrat (Spokesperson on women)

Date first elected: May 1997

This location was extremely noisy. The interview was interrupted as passing MPs greeted Jackie Ballard.

1Q: Could you tell me a bit about your experience of speaking in the House of Commons

JB: In terms of the number of times I've spoken

Q: In terms of your general experience

5JB: Right well I'll be honest I've spoken lots of times you know ranging from asking questions of the Prime Minister to making the opening speech in a parliamentary debate and making a closing speech on behalf of the Liberal Democrats in a debate and usually it is very nerve-racking I've never been barracked in the way that some women say they have been you know as a

10 woman I've never had interruptions as a politician I've had interruptions but I've never been barracked and I've actually found when I spoke for example in a debate on the Government's proposals for women which was actually a very flat debate and I think I was interrupted it might have been no I don't think I was interrupted at all actually you know they just sort of

15 listened to what I had to say and I find that really difficult because I didn't feel that I came through I felt that I was just delivering a very boring speech and everyone was sitting politely listening to it and afterwards I felt well I mean the whole debate was a bit like that there wasn't much sparkle or controversy in it and I didn't enjoy it

20Q: Why do you think the debate was like that

JB: Well it was partly because it was mostly women there I think um but it was partly because there wasn't a lot of political argy-bargy we were all trying to be I mean most of us were trying to be I mean one of the Tories made a sort of attacking Labour kind of speech but apart from that most of us were

25 trying to be constructive and talking about the agenda and there wasn't a lot of political argument about it but the down side to that was that the debate wasn't very bright and it was like nobody really cared about this debate and it wasn't important I did not enjoy that and yet the other time when I made the winding up speech for us in a debate on the third reading of the local

30 government Bill so it is government legislation and it is the third reading and so part of my speech was to comment upon what other people had said part of it was to put across the political message about why we were opposing it

- and I was interrupted by both Labour and Tories um and er gave way to them and so on um and I really enjoyed that I plunged into my speech and I
- 35 was feeling combative and it was you know it had life and erm
(interruption - passing MP talks to JB)
- JB: and afterwards I came out of that debate thinking oh you know I keep saying that one of the good things about women and debating is that we all listen to each other and we're all constructive but actually when you have that sort of
- 40 debate I didn't enjoy it um but when you have a sort of combative political debate when people are interrupting you and you can have a dig at people I really enjoy that and I felt it was a much better speech and that sort of bothered me a bit you know because it was working against everything that I had been saying I mean in a sense I suppose it's it's it's the format of the
- 45 chamber I mean on committees you don't make grand stirring speeches on committees sometimes it gets very political but mostly it is constructive and that is quite different you do have interruptions but they are more like you know 'I couldn't understand what you meant there' or whatever or 'somebody said that to mean so and so'
- 50Q: So would you say that give way interventions are markers of interest
- JB: Yes or they are part of the political argy-bargy you know when I say something rude about the Tories they want to come back and say 'what about the Liberal Democrats'
- Q: Moving on to the question of barracking you've said that you haven't been
- 55 barracked whilst making a speech do you do it yourself
- JB: No no
- Q: Do you think women do in general
- JB: Not a lot I mean the only time I do do it (laughs) is Prime Minister's Question Time when someone asks Blair a question and he just doesn't
- 60 answer a question at all and I have sat there saying 'Give an answer give an answer' because I've got frustrated by it
- Q: Why is it just in Prime Minister's Question Time
- JB: Because I get particularly frustrated I mean I don't often go into PMQs because I hate it um but when I do and someone asks a good question I get
- 65 frustrated that he doesn't answer it at all and I'm sort of saying 'answer the question'
- Q: Do you think the number of people in the chamber matter because at Prime Minister's Questions
- JB: Yeah I suppose it is full and that does make it feel more like a theatre and it
- 70 makes it feel more acceptable to do that sort of barracking I suppose and less noticeable that you're doing it but I don't generally I wouldn't generally do that and I certainly wouldn't make personal remarks if I was doing it it would be I mean I've heard some of the Labour people say shout across at the Tories 'you nasty little squirt' or 'you pathetic little wimp' or that sort of
- 75 thing they say and I certainly wouldn't say anything like that but you know if I was saying anything it would be 'answer the question' so women don't really barrack and if they do it certainly isn't personal
- Q: If women don't shout out is there something else they do instead I mean there was the clapping example wasn't there at the very beginning of the
- 80 Parliament
- JB: I thought that was good well I clapped in the Hunting Bill when we won the vote on that I think it is a much more natural way to respond I hate those

- 'hear hears' and I hate the banging on the table tops and I hate the 'hear hear' because it is a boyish noise and that is why I don't do it I mean the public
- 85 understand it as a normal thing to do but the 'hear hear' is a really animal thing to do and that's really men's behaviour or waving order papers as well I mean I've never done that
- Q: Do you think there are particular male and female styles of speaking
- JB: I don't know if I do actually I think my probable answer would be that there
- 90 probably is in theory but in practice I can't think of any examples of it which may be because of the kind of women who get into parliament because there are still very few women here so to get here you have to be combative and to get here you've really been through it so you've developed hard edges and a shell and all that sort of stuff and I think you've got to ape the men's
- 95 behaviour because that's the only way you're going to get anywhere so whether we are typical of women as a whole I don't know
- Q: How would you set up the debating chamber to improve it
- JB: Well the first thing would be the design of the chamber I would make it a horseshoe shape I wouldn't have the two opposing armies and I think the
- 100 European parliament is quite different in that respect but I think the shape does make a difference in terms of the confrontational nature and you know if you have a horseshoe shape you are not going to have these personal comments being bandied about so that would be the first thing I would do I would also try to get a better representation of women and that's not really to
- 105 do with the nature of debate but to do with representation I mean it should be more representative of the population as a whole I guess I would allow clapping and take away the banging on desks and all that sort of stuff
(Unclear section of tape whilst a group of MPs walk by)
- I think men need to know what the rules are and like parameters and I think
- 110 they feel happy in that atmosphere I think women are much more free in their attitude
- Q: Although it does seem that the male MPs are the ones who break the rules sometimes by shouting of turn have you noticed what is picked up on by the Speaker
- 115JB: I've not noticed whether it is gender differentiated but I have noticed that there are certain MPs that are her favourites and they are male they are Dennis Skinner and Nicholas Soames and they get away with murder Dennis Skinner talks all the way through and hurls comments at people I've never heard him being called to order he gets up to speak and she lets him if he
- 120 forgot someone's constituency and said 'the guy over there with the red tie' she'd let him so whether that's because they've been here a long time or because they are men I don't know
- Q: But are there differences between Speakers
- JB: Yes there definitely are I think the others are far more consistent although if
- 125 I criticise Betty I'll never speak in the House of Commons again (laughs) but I think the male Speakers are much more objective I think they mainly try to tell people off for speaking out of turn but of course there are ways to say things in the chamber so that the microphone and the speaker can't pick up what you're saying
- 130 (inaudible: JB Speaks quietly for 3 minutes about personal comments made about MPs)
(JB: Talks to another MP for one minute)

- Q: So are there any strategies that people use to make themselves heard so maybe barracking is one thing people do can you think of any others
- 135 JB: I'm not sure if this is generalised or not but quite a lot of the men are friendly cross party they'll have a drink with you or something but when they are in there they have a more confrontational role I mean the MP who has just gone by with her Bill on the protection of children I interrupted her at one point and asked her a question and I said that 'I know the Honourable
- 140 Lady has exactly the same aim as I have' which is a very polite way of doing it really you know considering that I was criticising her Bill it was a sort of 'I'm terribly sorry to be criticising your Bill and I'm really sorry to be telling you that you got that wrong and I know we're on the same side really' and I don't know if that just happened between us because we just happen to get
- 145 on or what but that wouldn't have happened between men they seem to be much more capable of being mates and having a pint and then going in there and knocking seven bells out of each other I think that when we know each other we can have a cup of tea and a chat together and we can go in there and maintain that attitude
- 150Q: Do you find this a good place to work
- JB: I think that it is an intimidating place to work because of its history and it is a strange building I mean I have my office in this building and not all MPs do but coming in here it is all so awe-inspiring um and it is very strange in that sense as a place of work and it is the whole bit about relationships with
- 155 other MPs because on one level we're all doing the same job and we all have the same pressures and problems and we all have a lot in common but on another level we're all in different parties and we're opposing each other and there are some people I don't like in other parties and I wouldn't want to share anything with them but there are others who I would like to get on with
- 160 but you really are prevented from doing that you know there is quite an uncomfortableness about it I mean I also prefer to come to work dressed casually and not wear a skirt and jacket all the time but you know I don't think you'd get in the chamber if you wore jeans and a T-shirt but you also wouldn't get respect here you wouldn't be seen as a serious player so we all
- 170 look the part and I find that is not particularly comfortable for me to have to be like that all the time you are also very aware that you are being looked at far more in terms of what you are wearing than if you were a man you know at the moment we're fighting a leadership contest in our party and all the comments in the press about me have been she's changed her image
- 175 she's lost a lot of weight which have nothing to do with my ability to be leader and even one thing said something about 'smartening her clothes' or something now I haven't I really haven't and I don't think they give men that kind of treatment and it is unhelpful because you feel that you are being judged on things other than what you say
- 180Q: Do you know of any directly sexist behaviour that has been directed at anyone in the chamber
- JB: No I think from what people say some of the attractive women MPs do get comments and I wouldn't count myself as one of those I've had comments about losing weight but I've taken that as being friendly more than anything
- 185 else so no I can't say that there have been any comments made towards me
- Q: Is there any training specifically for women MPs

JB: No there isn't I think it would be good if we could get women of all parties together but I don't think it will happen I think Labour women work together but I think Tory women MPs most of them don't think there's a

190 problem but some of us do talk to each other between ourselves but I suspect that once you're here people would resent belonging to it because it would get out it wouldn't be a secret and the men would use it 'Oh look there's a group of women MPs they must be weak to need that' you just can't afford to draw attention to the fact that you're a woman

195Q: So are there any other changes you can think of that would make your job easier

JB: there are things like knowing term dates well in advance and I think that will help women with families but I do think that things will change slowly but they won't change until we get a critical mass of women and I think a critical

200 mass is around thirty percent and we're not really near that yet

Interview Ends

Interview Transcript C

Interview information

Date: 15/11/00

Duration: 35 minutes

Location: The House of Commons tea-rooms

Other people present: None in interview but other MPs within earshot.

Start Time: 16.00 End Time: 16.35

Interviewee Information

Name: Jane Griffiths

Position/party: Labour Backbencher

Date first elected: May 1997

Notes: There is some background noise in the tea-rooms.

1Q: Could you tell me a bit about your experience of speaking in the House of Commons

JG: Well I suppose I was quite used to speaking in public as a councillor going to public meetings and campaigning that sort of thing but that was very much

5 local and didn't have 'the nation's eyes are upon you' really

Q: Do you feel that?

JG: Yes because um when I've spoken usually constituents have e-mailed me afterwards usually because they've seen it on the Parliament Channel I didn't expect it to start with and maybe it is the type of constituency it is it's the

10 silicon valley but I would have thought that people would have better things to do really than sit and watch the Parliament Channel it is surprising how many do

Q: So you are fairly conscious of that then?

Yes and I tend to speak on things which relate to the constituency as much as possible I mean I'm hoping to speak on Wednesday on the transport Bill debate which won't be particularly constituency related but um it is very scary (laughs) the chamber is designed that way it is supposed to intimidate you and I've talked to very senior colleagues also who speak all the time who always have butterflies in their stomach before speaking

20Q: where do you think that comes from?

I think it is knowing that what you are saying is going on record there's no going back once you open your mouth you start it is going to be on record and if you make a mistake people can always look it up no matter how far ahead in the future it is and I mean I'm not someone who is afraid of

25 speaking in public I don't suffer a great deal of nerves about it but nonetheless and because it is on TV as well I'm conscious of if I'm making hand gestures that look stupid you know

Q: Do you think that is the same for everyone though or do some people appear at least to be more relaxed than others

30JG: Um some people the longest longest serving MPs do appear fairly relaxed the ones who I find awesome although I disagree with them totally are some of the Tories who really enjoy it or really use the parliamentary

procedure to get time people like Eric Forth and so on you know (laughs and glances around to where a group of Tory MPs are sitting) because they do it

35 mostly with arrogance and they can go on for ages I don't think there's much point to it but I'm quite impressed that they can do it I mean I believe in short speeches because I don't see why we should bore people but if I'm going to be speaking for five minutes which is about what we get as backbenchers then I do prepare spend quite a lot of time and take a deep

40 breath before I begin and so on I can't I find it very difficult just to stand up and start there's times when we've got a debate on and the Whips will say 'some interventions would be good' maybe there's not many of us there or something like that and they say 'it'd be nice if you could jump in and say your piece and interrupt somebody' I've never been able to do it I've

45 jumped up and stuck my hand out and they've never given way to me but lots of the time when I

Q: They don't give way to you?

JG: But I've only done that a few times

Q: Perhaps if you do it not really wanting to do it, maybe it shows?

50JG: I think maybe it does I think perhaps the body language is indicative and they are like 'we can brush this one aside' although I'm reasonably assertive in most ways in Parliament

Q: I've found that give ways are an important feature and the more important a speech the more give ways and I didn't realise that the Whips actually ask

55 people to intervene [unclear section of transcript]

JG: Well I mean it is times like a couple of weeks ago when there is very severe weather and a lot of people couldn't get here until much later than they'd intended so there just weren't so many of us around and I got phoned up by one of the Whips saying let me know when you get here and I was late

60 getting here than I meant to be but because it is fairly close by the constituency it is not so bad for me and they said 'you were down to speak last week and didn't get called so we'd like some speakers for tonight because those people who were down to speak who aren't here' in the end I didn't do it for other reasons but um that sort of thing does happen and er I

65 find it hard to think quickly 'Oh my God what will I say'

Q: I suppose it is harder for the Tories because there are fewer of them

JG: There are fewer of them but they are more likely to get called you see because there's more of us and they do it even-handedly the Speakers we have to wait longer between each turn and then a lot of us are in marginal

70 constituencies and so we do spend great amounts of time in our constituencies we're not always here for every debate sometimes if I've got important things to do in the constituency and the vote is not until ten o'clock on a Monday night I might not get here until nine o'clock usually I'm here much earlier than that but there have been times [unclear section of

75 transcript]

Q: What about men, for example sexism or do you think there are things that men do in the chamber that women don't?

JG: Um yes there was quite a bit of it quite early on um gestures and name-calling and shouting from the benches

80Q: What sort of gestures?

JG: um the melon-weighing gesture I certainly experienced that in 1997 but they don't seem to do it anymore I think or not very much

Q: Is that because of the television?

JG: I think they got ridiculed for it for behaving like schoolboys something that
85 they'd always done all of a sudden there were people who were prepared to
ridicule them for it there were far more women than there's have ever been
before and I think that critical mass counts they do do a lot of shouting from
a sedentary position there's a lot of that and that is intended to put you off
your stroke

90Q: Have you been on the receiving end of that?

JG: Yes a number of times women tend to get it more than men um last week we
had the statement on Far-East Prisoners of war receiving compensation

Q: What day was that?

JG: That was um was it Tuesday morning one day last week it was the seventh
95 because I'd had an adjournment debate that day which was in the afternoon
and it was my son's birthday um and I jumped up to intervene on the
statement after the Minister had finished and I knew the colleague because I
had an adjournment debate on that subject it was years ago but they always
so I did get called and what I said was not was slightly out of line with what
100 everyone else said what most people said was that they welcomed it but were
we going to condemn the Japanese government for what they did and I said
that I welcomed it obviously people would be grateful for it but that this is
not the time to be condemning the Japanese government this is time to be
glad that

105 the former Prisoners of war have got something so that didn't go down
particularly well so they started shouting

Q: Could you tell what they said?

JG: Well one of them I could he was shouting 'question question' because it is
meant to be a question and I'd spoken for slightly longer before I'd got to the
110 bit that was a question a lot of other people do that because you want to get
your point across but because he didn't like what I was saying he shouted in
order to put me off my stroke and it worked for about a second because I
know I've watched it afterwards and he made me falter quite badly I came
back again but half a second is quite a long time when you're up there

115 (laughs) but in a way it is a legitimate tactic really it is done all the time I
couldn't do it I might intervene on somebody if it was possible at that stage
or I might jump up and get called myself and say I'm sure we are all
disappointed at the inappropriate remarks of the Honourable Member for so-
and so but shouting while you are talking is just rude but people do do it

120Q: Have you noticed any difference between 1997 and more recently, has
it changed at all?

JG: Um I think it has that is my subjective impression but I think that um it has
settled into people who are very very regular in the chamber who are there
for quite long periods and who jump up on a regular basis and those will

125 always be there then it is only ever full of other people for individual debates
I've noticed this with the Liberal Democrats partly because they sit opposite
me when they won the by-election for Romsey or whenever it was and their
new member came in and there she was and they were all there and I've
never seen loads of them before [unclear] I thought who's that send them out
130 they are a stranger you know (laughs) never knowingly been in the chamber
and er but there's quite a lot of there are so many MPs you don't notice it
there are quite a lot of us that are just never there

Q: And that's acceptable?

JG: nobody minds I mean as long as you can cope they don't seem to mind
135 whether you are sitting there or not most of the time but I don't think it goes
down hugely well with the public you see articles and I get letters sometimes
saying 'the chamber's half empty don't you care' and what is hard to get
across because it makes you sound lazy well a debate is likely to go on for
seven or eight hours and it is likely to be late so it is quite difficult to a) stay
140 awake and b) concentrate on what is being said

Q: Yes, you do notice people nodding off sometimes

JG: Oh I did fall asleep in the chamber once but it was about half past one in the
morning it was quite a long time ago and the whips had said 'the chamber is
ever so empty we need some support if you could try and be in there' so I
145 went in there and I thought I could feel myself going and the whip came and
tapped me on the shoulder and said 'look if you can't stay awake you'd
better leave the chamber because you are behind the next person who is
going to speak and you'll be in shot' (laughs) they were nice enough about it
they just didn't want it to look embarrassing you know when you've started
150 work at half past nine the previous morning half past one is quite hard

Q: Did you have any formal training

JG: Not here but I did have some as a councillor a few years ago now about six
or seven years ago and that was well worth having and I had a little bit I
worked with the BBC before I was a broadcaster and I had a little bit half a
155 day or something on presentation skills which I found extremely useful that's
where I got videoed and [JG clarifies role as local government councillor]

Q: What kind of debating was that?

JG: that's a semi-circular council chamber but there's not so many of you but it
is better attended it is fuller at any given time and it was when I was just
160 about to become Chair of a committee at work and would therefore have to
take questions from the public on a regular basis that sort of thing so
although I had spoken in the chamber quite actively the council did offer
training and I took it up and I did find it useful they offered training on
presentation skills and on media as well

165Q: But there was nothing for the new intake of '97?

JG: No there was one of the MPs knew one of the women who had a contract that
she would come in and give help on public speaking

Q: Who was that?

JG: It was Julia Drown and she had a contact and they ran two or three sessions
170 I went to one of them and it was kind of okay just to remind us about breath
control you know not hunch your shoulders up and to bring them down again
so that you don't hunch and squeak you know which women can squeak but
that was just set up informally it was just something that was Julia's idea and
a few of us did join in on that I think others I think it was run again later
175 which I didn't do but it was worth doing

Q: Was that only for women?

JG: Yes she only asked women

Q: Do you think it is harder for women?

JG: Not so much that it is harder I think that men are every bit as nervous it is
180 just that men are more swaggery about it but I think the men who are nervous
are more likely just to stay out and not be there there are lots of men who
never ever speak at all I think that we're conscious of this if you are nervous

you can squeak and then that invites ridicule my voice isn't particularly high but I'm still aware of it we had so much ridicule at the beginning Blair's
185 babes this and Blair's babes that they've never done this and they can't do that and they look ridiculous as if we're all the same and you shrug it off but you don't want to foster that kind of ridicule

Q: That's probably a way of keeping the status quo isn't it, to ridicule?

JG: Yes, yes it is and it's meant to be and I've tried to speak on things which
190 aren't really girlie things on defence on prisoners of war and on transport which is an interesting one anyway and not so much on things like childcare or health which people expect you to speak on

Q: Yes I've noticed that topics do tend to be quite gendered and a lot of the Defence questions never have any women speaking

200JG: There's only one female member of the defence select committee on our side and I think she was the first one it has always been a man and yet a woman could just as easily represent a constituency that had a defence establishment in it just as easily as a man

Q: Do you think people make other people's speeches less effective in any other
205 way apart from barracking, are there any other things that they do?

JG: barracking does it if it works but um it is a bit of a baptism of fire well unhelpful interventions that happens more against junior frontbenchers making unhelpful interventions rather than backbenchers but a controversial adjournment debate backbenchers will often get unhelpful interventions
210 [unclear] the other side will sometimes try to fool you because they are supposed to let you know whether they want to intervene they let you know in advance you know if they want to intervene in an adjournment debate so you'll get a message on the answer-phone a message this is so and so I'd like to intervene very very briefly so you ring them back and say well 'okay um
215 what sort of intervention' 'oh nothing at all it'll be helpful' and then it isn't helpful which is a bit sort of bad form

Q: so is that a fixed procedure, to give you notice?

JG: It is discourteous you could stand up and say um and in fact the Speaker might well do it because you are supposed to let the Speaker know as well as
220 the other people the Speaker I've seen the Speaker shut Members up where they've jumped up and intervened and the Speaker's had no notice of it and said that it is not a courtesy and that the Honourable Member must have a chance to speak and will not be intervened on unless they have had notice

Q: What about the general culture of the House of Commons?

225JG: Well I'm not a man and I never went to a public school and I suppose if I were both those things I'd be very comfortable here you get used to it but I'll never be at home in that kind of environment that we have here I think I can do things I think I can achieve and I think I can be effective but it'll never seem like the right way to do things this sort of way I mean some of
230 those Tory men [unclear]

Q: They look like they're at home don't they?

JG: Yes they do and perhaps we don't I'm just always conscious that when I sit on the green benches members of staff help me with everything else I do but the one thing that they can't do for me and that only I can do is to sit on
235 those benches and whenever I sit there I'm aware of what a privilege it is but you don't look relaxed and then of course there are so many of us in uncomfortable proximity to colleagues

Q: Can you see any way that it'll change

JG: Well the Westminster Hall debates are in a semi-circle and it is less of that
240 atmosphere much much better it is a pity that no one turns out (laughs) I had
one last week and it was just me and the Minister that's all just the two of us
across

Q: What status do those debates have?

JG: They are adjournment debates so they are an opportunity for a backbencher
245 to raise something we have them now on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings
and Thursdays as well in Westminster Hall and I think it is a good that we do
because there's it is more of an opportunity for backbenchers to have a go at
something and so I was talking about cinema and I was feeling quite good
but but there was just me and the Minister there (laughs) I was talking about
250 the constituency and how there's a 1920s cinema building which is now
closed and ought to be preserved but also about art cinema we've got a very
thriving area in terms of screen-writing and there are plenty of opportunities
to go and see film but not an art film but the place is big enough and could
sustain it so why not use this lovely building and the Minister was very
255 encouraging which was not exactly what I expected but

Q: I think that is everything unless you have some particular experiences that
you could tell me about in which you have found it difficult to be heard

JG: It is hard to cite specific instances it is just that women get more barracking
more than men do and it puts us off our stroke we are thought to be more
260 vulnerable so we have to work harder at not being vulnerable that's pretty
much it

Interview Ends

Interview Transcript D

Interview information

Date: 04/04/01

Duration: 50 minutes

Location: The MP's office in Portcullis House.

Other people present: Nobody

Start Time: 10.00 End Time: 10.50

Interviewee Information

Name: Harriet Harman

Position/party: Labour backbencher (former Secretary of State for Social Security and Minister for Women 1997-1998).

Date first elected: 1982 (By-election)

Notes: The interview was interrupted by the testing of fire alarms in Portcullis House.

Transcript:

1Q: Could you tell me a bit about your experience of speaking in the House of Commons

HH: Right well I mean in a way language is very much a key issue I think but it is more than language it is also about um sort of context and tradition and with
5 the chamber language is part of you know one element of all that so that I think that speaking in the House of Commons is very much affected by the fact that if you are a woman you are speaking in a virtually all-male chamber because um even though there are now twenty twenty-five percent women you could easily find yourself you know not every is in the chamber at the
10 same time so you can easily find yourself with an all male audience on your side and the other side so it doesn't always mean just because there are now one in five one in four women in the House of Commons it doesn't mean that they'll always be there and when I was first elected in nineteen eighty two um I was only one of three percent of women and at that stage you could
15 virtually guarantee that you'd have an all-male audience and therefore you were by definition different you were not speaking to people like yourself you were speaking in a debate amongst people who were different from you erm and so so that that makes it a very particular experience I mean we all know the difference between speaking to a group of women as a woman or
20 speaking to a group of men and the House of Commons is about speaking to a group of men and therefore you're already treading on quite different ground there erm the other thing about the House of Commons is that you know it has different moods sometimes you know the audience if you like within parliament rewards oratory so high-blown punchlines soundbite
25 rhetoric you know emotional kind of examples and that's Question Times where it's kind of confrontational or controversial slagging match but it's not always like that it's got another side to it where it can erm respond to and reward pompous gravitas you know it is what they describe as 'the House was at its best' well I mean I don't really rate it when it is at its best you
30 know I don't rate it when it's at its worst

Q: Can you think of an example of when it has been described like that

HH: Erm um I will

Q: or is it a type of debate

HH: Sometimes it might be when if you know if you are discussing foreign affairs

35 it might be when there is a discussion about um this is a test by the way

(Test fire alarm starts during interview)

the Gulf War or reporting back on Kosovo so basically they say 'The House was at its best today' you know this is what the reporter would say erm so but it is still not neutral er gender neutral territory when the House is at its

40 best it is different but it is still a very male environment and it venerates men being pompously self-important basically urm and that's when people say I think the whole House will join me in x y and z

Q: And who are those people

HH: Well anyone who has been pompously self-important basically and you

45 know there is a role for gravitas but the the boundary between gravitas and taking things seriously and pompous self-importance is very you know is very easily crossed and you know actually I think that women are less likely to be involved in their normal going about their business to be involved in in your face confrontation point scoring adversarial activities which is Question

50 Time but neither are they likely to be the big 'I am' the whole House will want to agree with me when I say x and y so mostly on television people only see question time they don't see the House at it's best erm erm but as far as language is concerned the House of Commons is about men speaking about men to other men there's no doubt if you look at the language that is

55 what is going on and it is then also reported to men outside through men and I've actually raised the issue of the very few women in the press gallery erm (Tape paused because of fire alarm 30 seconds)

HH: Now where have we got to we've got to me talking to men about and then it being reported via other men in the press gallery and therefore if you look I

60 mean when I first raised this affects the issues as well as well as the language obviously when I first raised child care and things like that it was regarded as completely what was I raising it for I clearly I didn't realise where I was you know confirmation if there was ever any needed that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and this was not the stuff of politics so it relates to

65 issues so therefore the issues that women would be most likely that the women would be most likely to bring in and be expert and knowledgeable about and committed to um then were um ones where you sort of you're not just getting a reception that you're a woman speaking to a man you are raising issues that men feel are not political issues erm now that's changed

70 quite a bit with there being more women MPs there are fewer no-go areas in terms of what you can talk about however the so you can bring it in but you don't arrive in the chamber of the House of Commons one day and find that men are talking about it you know you would find women talking about it or (Fire alarm ends)

75 if you talked about it you would find women listening but you don't find men talking about it so there's still a difference in what women and men are talking about in the House of Commons

Q: Could you tell me a bit about what it was like for you in 1982 when you started

80HH: Well I I my challenge I think everyone finds their first speech in the House of Commons a bit of an overwhelming experience erm but um mine was kind of compounded if you like by the fact that I was much younger than everybody else by the fact that I was a woman and only one of three percent and also that I was hugely pregnant at the time so I was kind of quite an odd
85 figure so um well I was you know unique really so um so all that kind of clouds you know what your audience are thinking of you the fact that I felt that I was in a very small minority it just meant that I went it alone and I was very critical of the way the institution operated very outspoken didn't spend any time trying to build consensus with my colleagues cos I thought that was
90 a waste of time the point was to sat it how it was and to say it how it appeared to me and really to be quite outspoken and sharp so that was my strategy is er to try and be an insider when quite clearly I was never going to be an insider in that House of Commons you know my my strategy was to build up my strength outside so that when I came to the chamber I came
95 knowing that I'd built up my strength outside but also to be building for more women to come into the House of Commons and both of those you know succeeded very well I mean you've got more women in the House of Commons and actually I did build a big base so that they couldn't really rubbish me in the way that they would have left to their own devices be very
100 keen to do

Q: Who do you mean by 'they'?

HH: Well th the you know just generally the other members of Parliament and you know the press lobby you know the kind of House of Commons chattering classes if you like I mean I'll give you a copy of a couple of
105 articles that I wrote where you'll see that I'm really speaking very much where I'm speaking about the chamber and about the House of Commons I'm speaking very much as an outsider I wasn't trying to build bridges or mend fences

Q: Do you think that style more lent itself to being in opposition

110HH: I don't know I don't think I had any choice anyway because I was in such a tiny minority within my own party as well as um within the House of Commons there were also much more women when we because the government I mean things have changed lots of things have changed um but there was a very obvious path for me you know I had no choice but to be an
115 outsider and in a way that's quite an easy thing to do because you are not trying to take anybody with you who's in there you just say well that's how I see it like it or lump it um

Q: Did that style of not building bridges as you say change at all over your time in office

120HH: Well er obviously there were people coming into the House of Commons like Patricia Hewitt you know Anne Campbell Margaret Hodge Tessa Jowell who I mean I wouldn't have to build bridges with I mean they were people like me coming in um so how I work in the House of Commons is affected by who's here and who's here is a lot more representative of of
125 women and younger women in particular and women who are combining work and home which is one of the big economic and social policy issues of the day but which is so much more an issue for women than for men you know erm

Q: Did you have any training when you began

130HH: No oh no no there was no it was much in those days it would have been inconceivable that there would have been any media training any speech training in any way shape or form you are literally you know on your own as your representative for your constituents and in a way it would have been regarded as intrusive to offer training because you were clearly fully

135 fledged in order to have been there um

Q: Are you aware of there being any training now

HH: Oh yeah you can ask Millbank about that but I'm there is now an induction programme which is much more sophisticated well I mean I didn't have an induction programme there wasn't one I just sort of arrived there's now you

140 know handbooks you know all sorts of things which tell you what sort of resources are available it is much more sophisticated now and much better it's still a million miles away from what other organisations might do or at least would be desirable to do

Q: What are the differences between speaking as a Minister in the House of

145 Commons and speaking as a backbencher

HH: Well speaking as a backbencher is an absolute piece of cake as compared to speaking as a Minister because there is not any particular there is no particular point for the opposition to hatchet you down um and therefore you've got much more space in which to say what you want not every single

150 thing that you say is going to be under a you know under attack simply because you a government Minister so it is a very embattled position to be a government Minister erm you you it is quite hard to step back and ruminate it is quite hard to know the answer to every single question when you know you've got to defend all sorts of things that you never did but that you take

155 shared responsibility for so er speaking now as a backbencher of some twenty years standing and in a House which is much more sympathetique I don't know what the English word for that is erm for me than it was twenty years ago erm it's a piece of cake for me now and erm I most notice that when I was doing my speech on Damilola Taylor because I could say what I

160 wanted and people were going to listen and they were going to give me a fair hearing erm and I think it is partly age I think for a younger woman you present a particular sort of challenge to men as an older woman it's it's I suppose you have more status but also it is an age thing if you are new in as an older woman you get a much easier ride than if you are new in as a

165 younger woman erm

Q: Is that because more age is more status

HH: No it's not so much status um I don't know how to put this without erm erm but well I mean I don't know how to phrase this I know what I mean erm I know what I want to say but I don't want to say it I mean in a way you know

170 this is off the record then it's more about [-----

-----] but it is like this because it's there is not a critical

175 mass of women if there was equal numbers of men and women there wouldn't be such an issue in quite the same way but it is when you get an overwhelmingly male group and one woman walks in now what's going to be the reaction if she's a young woman well it's different if she walks in as an older woman but don't quote me as [-----

180 -----] because I'll just get engaged in another big row

Q: Could I quote you anonymously

HH: Erm yes but make sure it doesn't look like me you know a former cabinet Minister of twenty years experience she said you know bury it somewhere but I've certainly noticed that with women in the new intake that older

185 women have had a much easier time than the younger women erm I had a I had two this is just by way of illustration but don't use it because there is nobody else it could be attributed to I had two very bright researchers one was a kind of ordinary looking young man and the other was a sensational looking young woman aged twenty-five who had a first from Cambridge and
190 was incredibly clever he was if anything slightly less clever than her but very good they were both ace she had this kind of shining swinging long black hair and long legs and every time we were in a meeting

TELEPHONE RINGS Tape recorder stopped

she at one stage said to me you know what should I do about this should I be
195 getting big thick glasses and wearing my skirts down to my ankles and I mean she's a young woman young women were wearing very short skirts those days I mean was she always going to have to almost like veil herself she basically if they wanted to do serious business they would do serious business with him because they were very fascinated by her and attracted to
200 her and that just got in the way so they couldn't engage liase with that other part of her which was being very clever which was a real problem

Q: Do you think the by treating her as a sex object that was a way of wielding power over her

HH: Well no it was just them leering at her

205Q: But there are plenty of people to leer at I mean why her

HH: There aren't plenty of people to leer at in the House of Commons very few indeed because there's hardly any women here so there's hardly any women special advisors so one immediately stands out and if she's a twenty-five year old glamorous one then that's the status she occupies and she can't get
210 beyond that

Q: So you think it is more that they're leering at her than they are thinking er this is a young woman and that threatens my position in some way

HH: No no they are leering at her an once they've got her in their mind as somebody they'd like to be going out with they can't get to this is somebody

215 I could do business with in terms of liasing with her work and it's just erm so so it is easier for older women than younger women it is still very difficult for younger women even though there is more of them that problem in my view will not be solved until there is a critical mass of women and then women and younger women are not so exceptional as they are now but I'm

220 now not exceptional because I've just been around for so long and also because I'm older and erm I mean in a way things were easier for me when I was pregnant because I was kind of safely parked you know I was kind of but anyway anyway but language I've thought a lot about language but let me just mention my Damilola Taylor thing so by the time I did that I was not
225 on the front bench so much easier erm less combative older been around for a long time and erm therefore it was just very easy for me to do what I needed to do which was to represent my constituents in a given situation and I didn't have any problem with anybody you know nit-picking or anyone trying to stop me or shut me up or you know it was there was no problem but

230 that's taken me 18-20 years it's taken me twenty years of experience and it's taken more women

Q: And possibly the topic as well

HH: Yes possibly the topic as well although there's quite a lot of other people who tried to talk about Damilola and it was a very hot controversial topic so

235 it wasn't just the topic erm

Q: Moving on to more specific questions now could you tell me a bit about your experience of barracking or of attempting to gain the floor do you barrack

HH: No I don't barrack but wait a minute now but wait a minute there is one classic example the final Prime Minister's Question Time before the House

240 rose um and Siobhain McDonagh got up but anyway basically I don't know whether you'll pick it up on the tapes but Siobhain McDonagh got up and she's got quite a high pitched voice I mean some men have high pitched voices some some women have you know I mean er some men have lower pitched voices but er because the general pitch is a man's pitch but when a

245 woman speaks she's already higher pitched if she has a high pitched voice then she immediately immediately they started jeering (makes squeaking noises) like this going to like that I mean it was absolutely frightful I mean she kind of pressed on and asked her question but it was a dreadful example dreadful example although I don't know if you could pick it up on the tapes

250 because but it is totally sexist and designed to knock her off course before they'd even heard what her question was but it came from the Tories and her microphone was on so basically it might be that you can't hear it on the tapes because their microphones weren't on but if you look at the question it was a perfectly ordinary question which any other man could have asked but she

255 was she paid a price for asking that and she paid a price because she was young a woman and had quite a high-pitched voice and nothing more and

Q: Why then don't you barrack or shout

HH: Because it's like going down to their level I mean if you don't approve of something then you don't necessarily do it to retaliate because you don't

260 approve of that so erm but

Q: But if it allows people to get more floorspace what is an equivalent strategy that would be acceptable

HH: You have to build up the numbers of women that's the only way you can do it you change the nature of kind of what's going on but there aren't any

265 strategies that you could do I mean clapping hasn't really caught on although it happened once or twice no well it has done like when Betty Boothroyd was retiring there was clapping but as far as actual strategies for the chamber one of the things that people do and I certainly do and I'm certain other women do is to make sure that you get other women is to make sure that you get

270 other women in to sit with you when you speak erm so that I will I will always make sure that I am never going in to make a speech and I find myself on my own there will be a group of women that I'll ring up and I'll say if you're around can you come and sit next to me and it kind of just gives you a bit of gender solidarity erm

275 Q: That's a very informal example if female grouping or networking is there a more formal side to that

HH: No although the Whips will do it for Ministers so the Minister is about to be in trouble the whips will phone around and say get in everybody and everybody gets in and crowds round and their side is behind them and you

280 need to do that informally from the backbenches if you are a woman and you
you know the chamber is a more hostile place for you so you have to
organise your own solidarity I mean it is a bit pitiful that you have to
organise your own solidarity in order to be able to be effective in
representing your constituents which after all you've been elected to do but

285 there you are you know

Q: Could I just ask you about the type of language you used when you were a
Minister do you think that you used an adversarial style of speech when you
were in Question Times for example

HH: Well basically I started off with my adversarial style because I was on my
290 own and I was adversarial to everybody in the House of Commons because I
was coming in to make a point and the point was that I'm coming in here not
to succeed in the rules as they are at the moment I'm here to change this
place change the hours change who's here change everything so I adopted a
kind of non-consensual controversial style more more by accident than by

295 design I didn't sit down and think what's my strategy but with hindsight I
can see that's what it was um then erm as I came on the front bench our job
is to attack the Tories to undermine them to challenge them on everything
never to say anything supportive but to try to challenge their right to govern
so we can take over so I was then in the adversarial style for that and then

300 when I came into government I was just in the habit of being in an
adversarial style but

Q: Do you think that you gave as good as you got

HH: Well except that you make yourself more of a target if you do that so actually
my deputy Frank Field has got a very non party political non adversarial non
305 partisan style and he had a much easier ride than me but then he didn't make
himself a target erm and actually erm er so in Question Time by this time I
had so much adversarial baggage by the time I came to Social Security
Question Time I was big number one target and I would notice

Q: But what exactly had you done to be adversarial

310 HH: Well over the years I'd you know always been like this

Q: Yes but what sort of things did you say for example to be adversarial

HH: Well erm I was Health spokesperson

Q: No I mean what sort of things did you say to be adversarial were they
personal or

315 HH: oh no I have never ever I have never ever um ever um done personal
stuff partly because I don't want it done against myself but actually not doing
it yourself doesn't actually protect you from other people doing it er but I just
don't like that at all I've never done that erm and although worked very well
in the House of Commons so 'You are the Weakest link – goodbye' works

320 very well in the House of Commons but people outside don't like it they
actually don't like that point scoring but it works incredibly well in the
House of Commons erm but I don't do I have never done kind of um I very
much would do attacking adversarial style and attacking the Tories of their
record of the health service questioning what they would be planning to do to
325 the health service if they got in again so very adversarial but not personal so I
would accuse than of undermining the Health service privatising the health
service so basically I have been an adversarial protagonist on behalf of the
party for quite a long time so when I came to be Secretary of State I was not a
cross party statesperson congenial type of figure who everyone was prepared

330 to give a hearing because I'd been giving them a pounding in order for us to
 be able to get into government so I was if you like paying the price for being
 on the front line of getting the Tories out Frank Field had not been part of the
 National Campaign team he'd not been he'd been able to be er cross-party
 and agreeing with them because he hadn't been trying to get rid of them it's
 335 like Gordon Brown is very adversarial you know he's a target because he's
 been part of you know trying to get the Tories out and so as I say I don't do
 personal stuff erm at all although I would you know say I would use
 something that somebody has used in their speech and say like put it to them
 so it would be about like what you've said and what you're doing but not
 340 personal you know you're thick you're weak you're dishonest or anything
 like that although very much part of our getting into government was about
 undermining the Tories' integrity but I never did that I always felt slightly
 unhappy about that although it worked a treat (laughs)

Q: The other thing I wanted to ask you about is humour do you use humour in
 345 your speeches

HH: Well you tend to be funny in your own métier you tend to be at your
 humorous when you are relaxed it is a bit of a challenge for a woman to be
 humorous in the House of Commons that's not because women have less of a
 sense of humour generally or because women in the House of Commons
 350 have not got a sense of humour it is because they are in a very particular
 different position and it's all very well for the men to you know be er
 cracking jokes er they're amongst their own but women are in much more
 hostile territory

Q: How would it be received then if a woman cracked a joke

355 HH: Well jokes are very gendered and therefore if she'd cracked a joke
 which had a kind of edge about men in it it would go down like a ton of
 bricks because

Q: But I mean a non gender related joke

HH: Well um I think that when you're making a joke you are asserting the way
 360 that you are at home as anyone else and it kind of just doesn't work it just
 looks phoney because everybody knows that women are not as at home
 unless they are Margaret Thatcher or somebody you know if you are Prime
 Minister you've got so much else in terms of your command of the situation
 so yeah Margaret Thatcher would kind of you know make jokes and put
 365 people down in a humorous way she could do that erm but it is about you
 know you don't have the underdog cracking a joke basically and women are
 the underdogs

Q: So what sort of functions do you think humour has

HH: Erm well I don't know well I mean it's just well I mean I think that if you are
 370 outside the House of Commons I would always expect to use humour in a
 speech because for the sake of the audience just to give the audience a break
 you know er and and working you know trying to to make it interesting for
 them and make it a pleasurable experience for them to have to put up with
 them listening to you in the House of Commons erm I don't know you have
 380 to feel very much at your ease to make a joke otherwise you are taking a risk
 erm and I mean I feel still sufficiently antagonistic towards the chamber not
 to want to feel that I've got to give my listeners an easy time so um I don't
 tend to use humour and usually the things that I'm talking about are not
 funny I mean actually I don't like to be overly grim but but now I'm only

385 raising something now if it is serious and it is inconceivable in any way
 through the Damilola speech that I could have made a joke erm you know if
 you look at Yvette Cooper's speech on human fertilisation and embryology
 which she did the week before Christmas the Thursday or Friday before and
 there were no jokes in that I mean it was a very good speech um but it is
 390 inconceivable that she'd put a joke in erm so it depends upon the subject
 matter you're talking about you know Gordon Brown will sometimes use
 humour like for example like when chancellors traditionally do you know
 where they say you know I've considered the question of increasing er I have
 been under a lot of pressure to put duty up on whiskey and I have been
 395 considering it very carefully but I've decided to cut the duty on whiskey and
 everybody kind of laughs and it's like it's been set up yeah for thinking one
 thing and then he whips around and does another and that's that's kind of
 playing with the House a bit but that's a tradition in a way for the
 chancellor's speech it's kind of teasing in a way because he knows what he is
 400 going to do everybody else doesn't know what he's going to do everybody
 else wants to know what he's going to do so they play about a bit so er but
 there's very much occasions where humour is expected like for example
 when there is the Queen's speech there are two speeches before the Queen's
 speech by backbenchers and those are expected to be very light and the same
 405 with the budget I think there's a speech before the budget and usually that's
 my pager there are about um using humour but they are a set aside light
 occasion so you are not talking about a terribly serious subject where it
 would be very inappropriate but also you are expected to use humour and
 sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't

410Q: One other practice I'm looking at is filibustering which is probably the
 most overt kind of rule-breaking

HH: Yes although it is part of the rules I mean until we changed the rules it was
 not so much rule breaking that it was actually part of the custom and practice
 it was part of the rules of which I disapprove but I

415Q: But you are not supposed to talk off the topic are you

HH: Erskine May would say that you couldn't speak off the topic which is laying
 down the rules but actually in practice it is very much part of the rules very
 much part of custom and practice and rules with a small 'r' yeah so you
 would be breaking one set of rules but utterly complying with another set

420Q: But you could say that the idea of a debate is to try and equalise the
 amount that people speak

HH: Yes oh well that's not the terms of the debates in the House of Commons I
 mean I mean in theory that might be the case but not here in practice

Q: is filibustering a male or female practice do you think

425HH: Because women have been the pressure for making the House of
 Commons more rational more um sort of making the debate more coherent
 and more transparent and having an argument where there is one but not
 having an argument where there isn't one and because women have been in
 the forefront of the hours changing the hours and because for women time is
 430 a commodity which it is not for men then filibustering is a bit of a
 contradiction in terms for women because women have got lots of competing
 demands where men are likely not to have i.e. they've got their children to
 get home to or their elderly mother to be doing some shopping for so
 filibustering is a particularly er easy currency to use if time is not of any

435 value to you um

Q: Is there anything you can do if someone is filibustering you

HH: Oh well it's all changed now basically we don't have the the thing about filibustering was to make votes in the small hours of the morning

Q: But it still applies to Private Members' Debates because I've seen one
440 recently

HH: Ah yes so basically that's gone the business of speaking into the small hours of the morning well you can speak to the small hours of the morning but you can't push the vote so filibustering for that has gone filibustering remains for talking out Private Members' Bills

445Q: So that's very much a minority thing you would never do it

HH: Oh no but I would never do it anyway because I think that my constituents expect to be able to read what I say in Hansard or hear what I say and expect it to make sense or I mean I'm thinking of my audience outside and I don't want to be I mean sometimes you see people talking complete drivel now

450 you could say to your constituents oh well I was talking complete drivel because I was filibustering but you know I don't think they would have much truck with that now actually the fact of the matter is that constituents don't read what you have to say in the Hansard but I just disapprove of it generally Can I just make a quick call (Tape stopped for two minutes)

455Q: We've already talked about sexism a bit but could I ask you to tell me about any examples of sexism or discrimination that you are aware of

HH: Yes well you know any young woman attractive young woman in the House of Commons is thick is kind of you know an air-head which bearing in mind what people have to go through as a woman to get into the House of

460 Commons it's a bit you know but that's the kind of absolute standard or else

Q: Is that now as well

HH: Oh yes definitely I mean it always has been it is now still but

Q: And does that depend which party you are in or

HH: No but the other thing about it is that that there can be another definition

465 which is super-clever so a young woman who is a super-brain erm so you're either a Blair's babe meaning you're just sub-standard I mean there are hardly any women in the Tories to speak of I mean Julie Kirkbride is one of the very very few hardly any of them because of the electoral situation and the way they didn't put forward women so we're talking about Labour

470 mostly so we're either Blair's babes or you're a brainy babe so you know you can you are stereotyped whichever it is you are most likely just to be a Blair's babe but if you can punch your way out of that one you punch your way up into the brainy babes there's nowhere in-between

Q: What's behind the brainy babe stereotype then I mean it is quite positive isn't
475 it

HH: Oh it is very positive but it is about women not being able to have the normal range of characteristics men can be super-clever medium-clever erm you know medium thick or thick whereas women have more stereotyped labels I'm mean you've seen all the stereotyping and labelling that's gone on
480 because we are still in a very small minority and the women are still at the bottom in terms of lack of seniority so that although there was a huge leap forward in 1997 I mean no doubt about it we got to still remember that we are still very much in a minority and we're weaker than our numbers would suggest because we're newest

485Q: That's got to improve in the elections this year hasn't it otherwise it'll go straight back

HH: Oh it will go back so er so really er er then immediately the expectations were that we would be on an equal footing as if there was one in four men but that actually men are across the length of service range whereas the
490 women are all new

Q: So are there any other sexist comments that you can remember in debates

HH: Not in debates not to me partly because I'd thrown down the gauntlet when I first arrived and they would basically be a bit er a bit wary of doing that you know because they would know I would take them to task outside the House
495 and get a lot of support to give them stick but they would be able to get away with it in the House but they would be taking a risk they wouldn't want to take

Q: But say the example of the shrill voice is there some action she could have taken outside the House to stop that

500HH: No partly because it was kind of invisible that barracking

Q: Because it was collective

HH: Yes and secondly because Siobhain McDonagh saying I've been the subject of sexism would be as likely to make her a victim of more of it you know you've got to in a way have a strong base before you use it it's not a ready
505 you know that can go both ways you can either have people supporting you or you can you can have people erm criticising you as a whinger um but I was less likely to be I was not going to be likely to be criticised as a whinger because I had big base and an ideology and I'd pinned my colours to the mast of that ideology

510Q: Which is what

HH: Well feminism and therefore I could legitimately use that weapon of criticism against them because I'd made it an issue I'd said it matters and it exists

Q: Do you think it is easy for politicians to say that they are feminists

515HH: Oh I think that lots of women don't feel they can call themselves that which I think is a profound mistake and wrong because whilst there are so few women I mean it is a responsibility for women to speak up about issues which affect women like if you've got only two or three ethnic minority MPs there is an extra responsibility for them to speak up on issues to do with
520 ethnic minorities and they do but for them to say you know I want to be the same as any other you know non-ethnic minority MP is just unrealistic and doesn't understand the way things work erm but yes there it's like 'join us don't go down that path that will lead nowhere join us in the mainstream' and I right from the beginning said you know I don't care to be labelled as
525 being concerned about women's issues that would be a proud label for me and it matters it is half the population you know how can that be narrow how can that not be important but I was very thought through on that before I came in so I couldn't have done any different because it was not my mission and my course

530Q: So it is not really in people's interests it is a hard road

HH: Well I think it is and it isn't I mean I say to some of these younger women when they say I need to not be boxed in I say well you know actually erm you know you are more of a target but you are doing more because erm because there are fewer if there are fewer of you you have greater

535 responsibility erm and you can do more in your own area of concern than in
there are a hundred other people doing the same

Q: Do you think then the women who do that are trying to shed any
characteristics that make them stand out

HH: Yes they are trying to beat men at their own game because it is a tough place
540 to be different and then we have to be incredibly ideologically clear or just
instinctively dug in in order not to hear the siren calls to be part of the team
you know

Q: Which is a male team

HH: Yes basically but it is less of a male team it's it's more complicated now if
545 any siren calls to me to be part of a team well I've looked at the team and
thought not bloody likely I ain't going to be in that team in fact that team
needs a bit of a change erm so you know it was much clearer and much
easier for me partly because there were so few women partly because I was
so much clearly more you know that was really my part of my motivating
550 ideology and also I had no choice but to be you know I couldn't join they'd
been offered joining on limited terms kind of thing I was never really
seriously going to be able to join I mean a young pregnant women I was
always going to be an outsider and therefore I'd have been wasting my time
trying to be like the men or I could have just got on with what I believed in
555 whereas it is not entirely a waste of a woman's time to be like the men at the
moment although it is more vulnerable for them because when push comes to
shove they need their own base and they don't have it if they'd just have
been gender neutral

Q: But they also need the policies like the all women short lists and things like
560 that

HH: Oh absolutely and they also need more women coming in oh my God look at
the time Sylvia was just leaving weren't you Sylvia

Interview Ends

Interview Transcript E

Interview information

Date: 21/03/01

Duration: 40 minutes

Location: The MP's office in Portcullis House.

Other people present: Nobody

Start Time: 14.00 End Time: 14.50

Interviewee Information

Name: Oona King

Position/party: Labour backbencher

Date first elected: May 1997

Transcript:

1Q: Could you tell me a bit about you experience of speaking in the House of Commons

OK: Well first and foremost that it is utterly terrifying um (laughs) I've never had I've never been scared of speaking in front of people really I've never
5 had a problem doing anything like that I'm fairly outgoing and er I actually enjoy public speaking you know I'm someone who really enjoys doing that nevertheless (laughs) I walk into that chamber and I actually think I'm going to faint on occasions (laughs) well n not literally faint but you know your heart starts beating so fast you think I'm just going to go entirely
10 blank and I just won't be able to remember what I've stood up to say and I'm going to look a complete idiot in front of you know six hundred MPs and I mean happily that's only usually Prime Minister's question time because the rest of the time it is in from of about six MPs (laughs) but it has actually happened to me once and I think it did it happened to me once
15 and it became it because just like a you know a

Q: What happened to you

OK: Well that I stood up I there was a bit of confusion at one point in the it was actually in the Lawrence er debate er after my speech er it was a give way and the person Maclean who I was trying to get him to give way it is quite
20 unclear I mean if you are a new MP and I was a relatively new MP then and you don't quite understand what it is because colleagues say 'go on keep doing it' just speak louder because women are usually quite deferential and and if you say 'will the Honourable Gentleman give way' and he doesn't then usually you sit down well I tend to find that a lot of the
25 women do give up because it is impolite it's rude to keep on badgering and hectoring someone but in fact you have to keep on badgering and hectoring them because that's what with him what actually happened was he I said it about three times but I mean they don't record on the Hansard when you say these things but I said it at least three times and he didn't give way
30 but I'd been standing up and making it very very plain that I desperately did want to pick him up on a point he'd made and he didn't give way so I sat down but the Speaker then got up and said to him 'Does the Honourable Gentleman give way to the lady from Bethnal Green and Bow' because he had just been quite unclear as to whether he was or he wasn't and you know

normally they'll either stop entirely or they will carry on speaking at full
 35 force but he kind of didn't do either he kind of just hesitated stopped looked
 around silence and I thought and then he started speaking again so I thought
 that's it so I sat down and you know you well when I'm in the chamber I
 have a lot of points a lot of notes that I've made and I thought okay that
 one's gone forget that stuck it out or whatever and then I hear the Speaker
 40 calling my name again and I'm like (laughs) and so I stood up and er as I
 stood up just the the fear of the fact that I was taken unawares and that
 you know your name was called and you have to stand up sort of thing and
 I stood up going suddenly thinking why the hell have you given way now
 when you wouldn't before and er and as I stood up I realised I didn't my
 45 mind had gone completely blank completely blank and the moment I
 realised my mind had gone blank it was then followed up with just a sheer
 terror and I knew that I well as it transpired (laughs) I wasn't when you are
 that scared you can't work rationally through what you may have been
 about to intervene on you know what subject was it work back from that
 50 what did you want to ask you just can't do it well I can't do it and um and
 so I thought I mistakenly thought plenty of time so I said 'on the point the
 Honourable Gentleman raises' because I just thought its never happened to
 me before I'll remember it you know it'll (clicks fingers) something'll
 happen nothing and I was so embarrassed I just had to say er I'm sorry I
 55 don't remember that point I'll have to come back to it or something like
 that um and I remember I don't think I've ever been so mortified in my life
 um and er um so I was particularly upset because it was the Lawrence
 debate and Stephen Lawrence's um father Neville Lawrence had been there
 he'd sat for about five hours waiting throughout that debate he hadn't heard
 60 me speaking he'd got up about five minutes before I'd started speaking I
 spoke for about twenty minutes or something um I was pleased with my
 speech you know that was fine and everything and I even thought oh maybe
 I've got the hang of this Commons thing you know and maybe and that's
 why I was very insistent on him on this MP giving way because I felt that I
 65 could er you know that I was easily an equal with him in the chamber to
 have this argument about it which just shows you should never make such
 assumptions (laughs) and so er Stephen Lawrence's father Neville
 Lawrence was away all the time came back and sees me you know saying
 I want to intervene and thinks oh the second black woman ever elected
 70 let's see what she's got to say for herself and all I say is oh I'm sorry I can't
 remember I don't know what I wanted to say (laughs) and I woke up in the
 middle of the night like a two o'clock in the morning with you know that
 feeling of 'oh my God' and it was it was really difficult like with you know
 a horse ride or something if you get thrown off and like you have to get on
 75 next week or whatever or fairly soon after but I have never felt carefree
 (laughs) about speaking in the chamber again because what it's taught me
 was um it's the fear thing if that kicks in you don't have logic to fall back
 on um and once it becomes a psychological thing the 'oh that's happened'
 it is very difficult to to get round it um when I speak to MPs about it they
 80 all say well yeah that's how I've always been in the chamber do you know
 what I mean and I think maybe that I am that I didn't start off that way a lot
 of MPs start off that way

Q: Which is a shame because your speech in that debate shows that you are a

good speaker

85OK: Oh well I can't any more I'm not any more (laughs) I mean I don't know what I find is I find that it makes you want to write things down more which um (bleeper goes off) I'll just turn that off which is a bit of a killer for for speaking because you know you don't speak um freely (takes mobile phone call:30 secs) right sorry so yeah it is just terrifying basically in my

90 experience

Q: Can you explain a bit more can you identify what is terrifying about it

OK: Well it's um it's terrifying the fact that it's televised that you know even the most um irrelevant debates are on Cable TV or whatever you know I get a lot of people telling me even when I'm not speaking even when

95 I'm just sitting there er er 'oh you were looking around the chamber quite a lot' or 'oh you weren't paying attention' or you were doing this you were doing that and the point is after a while you do realise that people are watching you all the time um if people have a fascination with Big Brother the TV show well this is the working equivalent um you know constantly

100 so it is the fact that you are surrounded by people you can't see

Q: But I suppose some people don't really care about that

OK: Um no absolutely not all I mean is if you make a mistake in front of six people so what if you later know that actually another a hundred thousand people saw it

105Q: Yes but I'm really wondering why say for example Eric Forth isn't intimidated by the fact that he's on TV or some of the other MPs

OK: Well I don't think that I will feel intimidated about being in the House of Commons when I've been there for fifteen to twenty years as he has I mean I quite often now I mean I asked a question at Prime Minister's Question

110 Time a few weeks ago um and er I I won't stand up with a piece of paper in front of me because there's this er rather pathetic but unwritten rule in the House of Commons who stands up to asks a question with a paper or an order paper written on it just isn't a real MP basically and that's why they shout out every time someone looks down it's like 'reading reading'

115 it is it is

Q: There are also implications that you've been given the questions to ask aren't there

OK: Well yes there is that there's that connotation but there's also the fact that even if it is your own question I think it's the most fundamental thing

120 in what I feel about it now even though I disagree with the reaction that people have 'reading reading' which is really silly I think the point about the chamber of the House of Commons is that it is a debating chamber when people start reading from scripts you are not having a debate you are reading a lecture and that's the difference whether it is a speech or

125 whether it is a question speeches speeches are somewhat different as long as you can extemporise if you need to in a speech um I can understand why some of the more old-style MPs um look with some disdain if not contempt um at MPs that can't say a question without having to read it out if it is a meant to be a debating chamber maybe it isn't maybe it is a place in the

130 twenty-first century where it is not at the cutting edge of the nation's affairs people are more likely to see you know Andrew Marr on the BBC news than they are to see me or any other MP backbench MP in parliament then maybe it is just a place where you just read out your points but I would

be a bit sad if that was what it became and there is definitely that risk if you

135 um have people um doing that

Q isn't it something people do when they are new more of a transitional phase

oh well no yesterday in PMQs a very old MP I mean one who has been

140 there for ages at least fifteen years um was reading his question but I

understand the points but the thing that makes it terrifying is that when MPs

um are in a difficult situation um the worst thing you can do is just start

waffling and that's what happens when you are terrified and you're stuck

Q: But you did have an alternative in that situation didn't you I mean you

could have said 'no I don't wish to intervene'

145 oh absolutely if you were going to accept that you couldn't remember but it

never happened to me before I couldn't even really tell what happened in

what order I was just like oh I've got a chance to speak I will speak

(laughs) soon learnt that lesson it's like no make sure you have written it

down you wish you were one of those MPs who had it in front of you every

150 minute before you opened your mouth and actually for interventions now I

will always the result of that has meant that I am less forthcoming in

intervening because I don't like to do it until I've at least written down one

word or two words so that if you are seized by absolute terror you can look

down and you have some trigger its like what planet are we on where

155 are we again what's my name but that but that means you are less likely to

intervene um and er the thing is I've spoken to a lot of er well not a lot but

maybe ten or fifteen MPs about that sort of thing and they've all without

exception appeared to be um as terrified or if not more terrified than me

that's mainly women but that's because my friends are women and I talk

160 more to women um there are a couple of men as well

Q Do you have any strategies for making speaking easier

OK: Yes you can sleep at night I'm not joking it really made a difference after I

made this decision that I was going to have eight hours sleep a night it only

lasted a couple of months but it really make a difference it does make a

165 difference you know if you are absolutely exhausted which is the problem

with this job a lot you are just exhausted and the um thing that I find and it

does have an impact on speaking the thing that I find different in this job

than other jobs I mean I've been an assistant to a politician before and I

used to do not necessarily nine am to midnight which was my average day

170 quite often but I would regularly to nine am to nine p.m. a twelve hour day

but what I realised was in those twelve hours I would at least half the

meetings if not more I would be sitting at the back of the meeting taking the

notes sometimes daydreaming sometimes thinking about other things I was

never being required to be engaged or perform and that leads to a level of

175 exhaustion mental exhaustion which I have become quite staggered by I

mean I have begun to get headaches at four o'clock in the afternoon all the

time which I never used to do um I never used to get headaches at all

actually um and so it has made it more the reason it has had an impact on

speaking is firstly from my point of view I don't ever have time to prepare

180 my speeches before I go into the chamber I mean if you are a backbencher

like me you don't get called for like four hours anyway um to me the

thought of losing that four hours I might as well be writing the speech so I

haven't got another four spare hours to do it quite often so I am certainly

not proud of the speeches I give and they are utter rubbish compared with

185 what they would be if I had the time to prepare in a situation where I wasn't
half listening to what other people were saying um I think I am unusual in
that respect as most MPs do tend to come in when they are speaking and
have their set-piece speeches written out I mean I did that for my maiden
speech and I've never managed to do it since but I really think that this
190 issue of being heard and being given the opportunity to speak that at PMQs
there are a couple of PMQs when I noticed not a single woman had spoken
some of it is luck as who is being called but then some women have had
very bad experiences asking questions I mean some like Jane Griffiths
absolutely died because she had a mental block about asking a question I
195 mean that really makes you think that Westminster is a blood sport I mean
it is all there for the spectacle and the public execution is very much to the
fore and people can scent it and it is any slip of the tongue stupid things that
are not relevant in terms of someone's intelligence or their argument it is
really clumsy it is really nasty and vicious atmosphere

200Q: Do women shout out or barrack as well as men

OK: much to my shame and chagrin I have to admit that I think you go along the
route of if you can't beat them join them not not to the same degree
I personally very rarely at Prime Minister's Question Time I used to
virtually never say anything I mean in terms of cheering anything either
205 way either booing them or cheering us because I just find it very distasteful
once you become an MP for longer and longer there is a thing which I do
still actually find distasteful which men do all the time which is their
attitude towards the chamber which is that they own it and you see it in
their body language and the way they sit they will quite often sit with their
210 legs up you know like that and it is just like where do you think you are on
the dispatch box but also the ones further behind and you just can't imagine
women sitting with but more and more women are like well sod them they
think they can do it well then we'll do it so more and more you do start to
feel at home in the chamber you are not awe-struck to be sitting on the
215 green benches which I was personally to start with you know I just thought
gosh there are six hundred and fifty-nine people in Britain who are allowed
to sit on these benches to take part in one of these debates and I'm one of
them how can that be and and you are well I was gob-smacked by that you
behave yourself much more you just do and then when the novelty and the
220 fact that you are allowed to be there wears off then you become more you
know I mean yesterday I found myself sitting like that and I found myself
sitting and the other thing that I've noticed that I do in PMQs is that I just
can't take listening to the Tories speak about the health service or education
I mean they are the ones who took away my free school milk or whatever it
225 might be I just cannot I'll listen to anyone else criticisms from anyone else
about this government but listening to those slimy evil Thatcherites as far
as I'm concerned I cannot contain myself and now like yesterday I was
saying 'oh you stupid sod who do you think you stupid idiot' I mean and it
is very bad but um and I personally think it would be best if we didn't go
230 down that route but I don't know how you reverse it when you've got an
overwhelming number of men predominantly that do that you are never
going to have a quiet chamber when you know you've only got a hundred
and eighteen women or however many it is and the other five hundred odd
are bellowing and you're not so it is a bit difficult to sit there entirely silent

235 which I used to and some of the things they shout out are really vicious things I tend to think we shout out quite stupid things quite often just stupid things relating to I can't remember the other day a Tory got up one of the hurrah Henrys you know whatever blazer and um striped tie and one of our men just started shouting out 'get on your horse' or you know just stupid

240 things it is not intelligent it is not funny I think we tend to shout out stupid things and the Tories shout out vicious things the most obvious thing they shout out to any woman and the women are disproportionately in marginal seats because women never get selected for safe seats on the whole with some notable and grateful exceptions of course (laughs) you know they

245 started doing it with the women much earlier than the men and like two years ago 'Tory gain Tory gain' you know the minute a woman stands up to speak it's like 'Tory gain' meaning you'll be gone it is not just to women they'll do it to men who they think are marginal they'll do it to anyone they assume is useless basically but they will they are more ready instantly

250 and stereotypically to assume that a woman because she doesn't come in and bellow and you know might be a bit more softly spoken that she can't argue her point and the other thing is that women take notice on the whole of what people say I mean if someone interrupts me my natural reaction and instinct is to look up and stop what I'm saying and say oh you know

255 'excuse me can I help you' or 'what were you saying' or you know do you want to come into this conversation sort of thing that's a woman's approach which gets you nowhere in the House of Commons you get crucified if you take any notice of what they shout out at you you know you're a gone-er sort of thing you know you kind of start to realise that if you don't do it

260 then you are effectively ceding your speech um yeah it happens quite often what the other thing that will happen is that you hear someone shouting and you'll say well 'the point being made from the Honourable Member in the sedentary position of so-and so' and then you take on board what that point is and carry on and it doesn't actually mean that their point is actually put

265 into Hansard what they are saying if the Speaker takes it on board and they say it then obviously that's printed and that happens fairly regularly

Q: the other thing I noticed about your speech in the Stephen Lawrence debate was that you were stopped by the speaker for using unparliamentary language is that something you've found difficult to learn

270 OK: oh impossible (laughs) can you remind me what happened in the speech

Q: yes it was when the speaker intervened twice to ask you not to use 'you' it was after you'd just taken an intervention

OK: oh yes it is just a code and a language that you have to learn but I just

275 object to it because I mean I quite deeply object to it I understand the point with 'you' I understand that it is to avoid personal references and I think that's one of the best points about the British political system is because on the whole I mean if you compare it to a lot of countries we are far less personalised um I say that but then I'm comparing it to Bangladesh on the

280 other hand (laughs) where I go fairly regularly and I never cease to be amazed by how as soon as you lose that barrier it is just gloves off and it's a mess and then democracy you know you go from slagging each other off personally to then taking personal offence to then saying well I'm not coming back in the chamber and they are constantly shutting the parliament

285 down and it's I think it that is the thin end of the wedge
 Q: Of course in Scotland they can't say 'you' but they can say the name of the person
 OK: yes I think that's how it should be because it makes sense it makes sense
 but in terms of parliamentary language um I am having constant battles
 290 with Hansard I mean I go up when I have time and you can check your
 speech um and they'll have me saying things like um 'but has not the
 Minister realised that' you know and you think but I've never said but has
 not the Minister you know I don't say that that is not what I say 'I said
 'hasn't' can you change it' and they're like 'no no we have to have has
 295 not' and I'm like 'you are recording what I said I didn't say has not I said
 hasn't' you know and they just won't do it it drives me mad and they will
 for example maybe it is because I spent a year writing a column for a
 tabloid and er you know the one thing you learn very quickly actually is the
 value of short sentences and you don't er without becoming a moron you
 300 can actually learn how to make what you are saying clear more quickly
 understood and you can put your point across more effectively in some
 instances and they won't use them I mean I will say something in short
 sentences and I see it in huge long you know and I'm like 'no this is what it
 is' but you have to they will do it if you tell them to change it but quite
 305 often I don't have time and it is just really infuriating I know that a lot of
 people will sometimes pull your speech off the internet or whatever it is and
 you sound like a complete raving upper-class nutter (laughs) but the
 problem is that there is no objective measure the only measure is the
 Member's word I mean recently I asked them to change something it
 400 wasn't what I'd said but I realised that I'd made a mistake with the statistics
 they will usually change a statistic if you've read out the wrong statistic or
 whatever it was something like I can't remember what it was and they said
 'no that changes the sense so we can't change that' that's their guide but if I
 say 'but I promise that I said that' but I wouldn't say that because I knew I
 405 hadn't but if they wanted to they would be in their rights to check it but
 they can't check what every member comes up and queries but they don't
 check it anyway they will just make their judgement of whether it changes
 the sense or whether it doesn't change the sense but they can change
 everything else but the thing about parliamentary language is quite funny
 410 because I've got this thing where every time I made a speech I just never
 could get to the end of a speech without the Speaker um intervening so er I
 was giving a speech on speech and language therapy (laughs) aptly enough
 and I was utterly determined that my speech was not going to be interrupted
 by the Speaker on a procedural point by the Speaker at any time
 415 so you know I was going okay do not say 'you' you do not say 'you' at no
 point does the word 'you' come out of your mouth you know it is like
 'don't mention the war' (laughs) you can't help it but anyway so I was
 fairly well through the speech and suddenly the Speaker goes 'order order'
 and I just wanted to say 'why you stupid bastard' (laughs) and I knew I
 420 hadn't said 'you or anything like that and I sat down and I was literally
 glaring at him like that and he goes 'the Honourable Member must um must
 speak through the chair' and what he meant was and my colleague who was
 sitting next to me cos I looked at him cos I looked at the Speaker and I
 thought 'well I don't understand what he means' speaking through the chair

425 means that you are supposed to say the word 'Mr Speaker' which is another thing I forget to do and I very rarely do it because I think it is all a load of pants basically just think it's I just think that it's it's just a charade it's dressing it up because I'm not I'm not speaking to him I'm speaking to the other Members anyway my colleague was sitting next to me so I looked at

430 him and was going 'what is he on what have I done there' and my colleague went like that (waves hand) he went like that (waves hand again) because he was facing the speaker my colleague was there the speaker was there I looked at the speaker so that I turned to my colleague for help and so he went like that or like that (waves hand) and so I thought he was saying

435Q: Could you have said to him 'what do you mean'

OK: yes you could if you wanted it in Hansard going oh I'm really thick right for the hundredth time do you think you could explain what you are doing interrupting my speech but so I thought he'd said you need to wind up and I was incensed because I you know still had quite a bit of my speech and I

440 you know it was a very important speech for the constituency it was something I was going to send out to a lot of people so I was like oh alright so I can't well I think I said 'thank you as ever for your guidance Mr Speaker of which I am as ever in need' you know in the most sarcastic voice I could muster and carried on but what he meant was that I wasn't

445 facing him enough it was nothing I had said I hadn't made a mistake it's outrageous I think It's disgraceful it is him just wanting to assert his little bit of power that he's got to say 'you must look at me'

Q: Is this Michael Lord

OK: Yes

450Q: Do you think that they intervene upon different people more or less than others

OK: yes absolutely they will do it on younger Members you know older Members you know the more senior you are you just the more you get away with murder which is why I do expect to get away with murder at

455 some point in my career cos you basically just earn it just in terms of the number of times you are humiliated (laughs) it starts to tail off after a point

Q: Yes but then will you be hard on the younger members

OK: No not at all because er and hold me to it well firstly actually in all honesty and truth God knows if I'll be here if I'll be here after another five years

460 because the workings of the House drive me so completely insane that I really don't know that I will but um if I were and given that it's a safe seat and given that a lot of people in my position would be here for twenty years um I hope that we would have changed enough um by then I hope we realise how stupid we look to the outside world well how stupid we look to

465 me never mind and to a lot of other new MPs um and also the thing of exercising power for the sake of it which and it is also exercising tradition for the sake of it it is the tradition that keeps people out and you can do that principally in two ways through jargon and arcane standing orders and rules of the House and those combine and then you can throw into the mix basic

470 intimidation um but those two things particular the jargon and the rules but I do not basically see any need for an MP to have to look at the Speaker while delivering a speech particularly given I guess the whole thing to me is that if I'm in a room and I have two people on one side and thirty people on the other I will naturally be drawn towards those thirty people now the

475 fact that ten of those people are in the chamber and twenty are in the public gallery um maybe should mean that you shouldn't look that way

Q: Certainly my impression from watching you give that speech was that you didn't seem to put much store in the rules like using the correct parliamentary language is that right

480OK: I mean it is a bit of a paradox because I do have very great respect for um rules in general most rules are there because they serve a purpose and one of the most frustrating things about working at Westminster is that so many of the rules just do not serve any purpose at all other than tradition and so I think most people from our generation take an evidence based

485 approach to things and there is no evidence to support why you would have so many rules that you do like looking at the Speaker or um you know not being able to address people by their their name

Q: Do you have any examples of sexism in the chamber

OK: well very early on one very old labour MP and by old labour I mean

490 physically old (laughs) um said to me and I think he meant it as a joke um and I was in the Members' tea rooms and he said 'what are you doing here why aren't you at home doing the dishes' um and the reason it stuck in my mind was that it was so un-funny I thought that it can't be a joke cos that's so un-funny and you know things like that you just go 'what' um I think

495 they are doing it because they think it is funny and they are not doing it because they think you should be at home but they just have a very poor sense of humour that's why but there's a lot of um it is not so much sexism because it cuts both ways but you get a lot of attention for looking a certain way you know I think the few um I mean it is not the same for men but um

500 you get a lot of you know as a young women you get a lot of attention from men it is not I mean it is less bad than walking past a building site here which is much more hassle than er the male MPs I I think the sexism in Westminster isn't really in terms of the individual male MPs um although you do get instances of it um it is the aggregated sum of the working

505 practices which make it virtually impossible for a woman with a family or a woman with a care responsibility which obviously a lot more women have than men to do the job to be an MP and there I've found terrible sexism in the er response to the er question of modernisation um which is along the lines of and I've had people er saying it to me in the chamber um if you'd

510 wanted a nine-to-five job you shouldn't have got this job you know I mean and I find it deeply sexist and very offensive and but again but although it is sexist it is not just women it damages at all I mean there are quite a few young men here um but that by far is the greatest obstacle and the thing that makes me almost choke with indignation when I think for example when I

515 because for example MPs will say that to me and the MPs who say this to me wouldn't know a busy packed surgery if it got up and hit them in the face you know they quite often because I've asked one of them I actually said to him 'by the way how was surgery today how many people did you have' and he said 'oh I had five last week' and that's er normal out in the

520 countryside somewhere and I know that they're going to be having a really bad time at this moment cos you know once every thirty years a plague descends and then it is terrible and it is catastrophic but that's how it is and in my constituency because it happens to have the highest incidence of poverty anywhere in Britain every single week you know I get between

525 thirty to fifty constituents to their five and they're telling me I don't know
what hard work is and they do a fraction of my work
Interview Ends

Interview Transcript F

Interview information

Date: 09/07/01

Duration: 35 minutes

Location: Members' tea-rooms, House of Commons.

Other people present: Nobody

Start Time: 17.15 End Time: 17.50

Interviewee Information

Name: Steven Twigg

Position/party: Labour backbencher 1997-2001, junior Minister at time of interview.

Date first elected: May 1997

Transcript:

1Q: Could you tell me a bit about your experience of speaking in the House of Commons

ST: The first time I spoke was very nerve-racking um is the first thing to say um it is um you do have an enormous sense of the history of the place when
5 speaking particularly for the first time um I think there are all sorts of different cultures at work there is definitely a very masculine culture there is a very adversarial atmosphere in a lot of debates particularly in Prime Minister's Question Time and in a lot of other debates too um it reminds me in many ways of the Oxford Union debating society and I think one is
10 modelled on the other they are probably modelled on each other you know over the years um and I have to say that as someone who enjoys public speaking and discussing politics I don't find the culture or style particularly positive or enjoyable or comfortable myself and I think it doesn't lend itself very well to um how shall I put it doesn't lend itself very well to actually
15 finding solutions and answers to problems it lends itself more to grandstanding

Q: What sort of things would make you uncomfortable then

ST: It's a general atmosphere and to an extent being new there's a big premium on experience here um one of the things I was and am indeed again
20 involved in is the whole debate about the modernisation of the Commons one of the recommendations of the modernisation committee in the previous parliament one of the first recommendations it made was that the tradition whereby Privy Councillors um were selected to speak first in debates should be done away with and that's a matter for the chair and if
25 you were to analyse the patterns um please don't attribute this bit to me if you were to analyse the pattern of who speaks in debates there's still a big advantage given to Privy Councillors um the Speaker has pretty much total control over who speaks but there are certain conventions about rotating turns from one side of the House to the other and so forth um but one
30 convention that we thought was not appropriate to sustain was that just because you are a Privy Councillor you are called first now it may be that as a Privy Councillor you have greater experience of the relevant area you

know I think no-one would doubt that if you're having a discussion on the situation in the Gulf John Major who was Prime Minister during the Gulf
 35 war it doesn't apply any more because he's not here any more but when he was still an MP wants to speak in that understandably he is called early but if you're having a general debate on crime or education someone who's just come in here being a police officer or a teacher is probably more interesting than someone who has been here for forty years and is therefore a Privy
 40 Councillor and in terms of gender Privy councillors are overwhelmingly male because Privy Councillors are people who held senior positions in government or opposition in governments in the last few decades and therefore by definition they are far more likely to be male and far more likely to be part of if you like the establishment culture within parliament
 45 within government because it is seen as a progressive change in the way that parliament is and the way the House of Commons is so that's one an example of what I was talking about at the beginning
 Q: Do you think there is a kind of old boys' network operating in the House of Commons
 50ST: It certainly exists um there are a number of old boys' networks exist in this place they are I put it in the plural because I think they tend to divide along the party lines although they will have a lot in common you know there may be a Labour old boys' network and a Tory old boys' network but what they have in common is that they are defending a lot of the traditions in this
 55 place um I think there's a clash of cultures now in the House of Commons um and I came in the '97 intake which was the one where there were a lot of women MPs and much younger MPs and particularly on the Labour side and so I think that we had or have a different culture of one that is er not necessarily challenging all the time but one that doesn't necessarily accept that old boys' culture now it may be that some of the new boys and maybe
 60 girls I mean it is not purely a gender thing I mean some of the fiercest defenders of the traditions of the House are women in general I think there is a gender aspect to it some of that 1997 intake will have fallen in with the old boys and gone native so to speak but I'm not sure there's a new lads' network but some of the new people might be falling in with the old
 65Q: Do you think increasing numbers of women MPs are likely to change the House of Commons
 ST: I think so to some extent I think there are differences I see it in some of the debates that I've taken part in there are differences that come from some of the newer younger women
 70Q: what kind of differences are they
 ST: I mean I'm just very wary of enormous generalisation because I mean I can think of plenty examples where this doesn't apply but I think there's an element of a lot of the newer women and indeed some of the newer men who are wanting more to have debates based on um seeking solutions um
 75 assessing um information trying to build a consensus rather than have a confrontation um I'm afraid I can't I can't think of any examples
 Q: Do you think that's ever achieved
 ST: well I think it is not so much about debates I think it is about the methods that are used in parliament and one area to look at is the whole area of how
 80 legislation is scrutinised and increasingly what we are seeing now is pressure to scrutinise law before it comes before parliament in committees

and I think that sometimes that can be a charade and that sometimes in fact it can be um it can be a positive way of going through things in a more um a more consensual manner depending on the nature of the subject you know

85 if there's something where there's a fundamental divide between the parties then there's a limit to how much consensus there can be but a lot of um a pre-legislative approach is about having an evidence-based enquiry and there is more and more pressure to move in that direction and I think that will change parliament eventually

90Q: Can I ask you about some of the strategies I've been looking at firstly barracking do you think that men and women use this strategy

ST: there's a Conservative women MP called Julie Kirkbride who has well she doesn't do it any more but in the last parliament for about the last year or eighteen months whenever a labour MPs or a LibDem MP with a small

95 majority stood up she'll shout 'Tory Gain' and now ironically almost all of them were not Tory gains (laughs) so it is not always the men but it does come mostly from the men

Q: what about more personal barracking have you ever experienced it

ST: no I personally haven't I think I've been quite fortunate in that respect but I

100 have seen it happen to other people and it can be very unpleasant um I think a lot of it is about confidence and I think if some people one of the opposition party spot that someone is perhaps lacking in confidence then they exploit that and I have quite a confident style of speaking and maybe that therefore doesn't make me quite so um susceptible to that kind of um

105 I've seen examples of this at Prime Minister's Questions actually this is probably the best there's this convention at Prime Minister's Questions that you shouldn't refer to notes and if you do people on the other side particularly Tory MPs do this to Labour MPs but to be fair I've seen it done the other way as well if someone does refer to their notes they shout

110 'reading' and I've seen people very put off by that but Prime Minister's Question Time is a very pressured environment it is the only thing we do that's actually watched by serious numbers of people out there it is the only occasion in the week when the House is full um you have to get a point across in a question quite succinctly so there's a lot of different pressures

115 on people and I've certainly seen people kind of shrivel up with it really um I've done Prime Minister's Questions um three or four times in the last parliament basically one a year during the last parliament and you know there's a wider issue about what perhaps the vehicle of Prime Minister's Questions is there to do and the pressure or expectation to ask a question

120 that is helpful of you are on the government side um which I think can produce quite embarrassing consequences the first time I asked a question was a few weeks after the election and I felt very much in the loyalist new MP mode and I asked a question to do with crime that had been picked that day and it gave Tony Blair a chance to say a bit more about it um since then

125 I've tended to go for cross party questions either ones that I was involved with personally such as the Cyprus question or an earthquake

Q: I've noticed that some quite innocuous questions asked by say Labour MPs often have an adversarial part at the end where they attack the Tories Have you ever used that sort of question

130ST: I don't think I did do that no I don't think I did the strategic importance of that is to remind people of what went before and I can see the politics of

that and I think there are circumstances where it is absolutely the proper thing to do but I think people should be more sparing with that kind of attack

135Q: What about sexism have you ever seen or experienced that

ST: Oh yeah there's loads of that particularly from the Tory men against the Labour women and that's since '97 and 2001 and that Blair's babe thing that's still that 'babe' expression is used you know I was winding up a debate last Thursday on House of Commons Modernisation and some of the
140 Conservatives in the chamber were just quite openly referring to 'the babes' and that's actually in speeches you can probably see it in the Hansard I think it is sexist and discriminatory and I think it must be a mild deterrent to speaking although I wouldn't want to over-state the case

Q: Have you noticed humour being used in debates and question times and if
145 so how is it used

ST: well it is used in a variety of different ways and um William Hague is quite well-known for using wit and um and he has a natural wit although I think there is something very exclusive about his humour and I often think his jokes although they are funny are actually very inward-looking about
150 parliament you know he's often making a joke about something that relates to something that happened in parliament and I'm not sure they'd actually mean anything to people out there um which I think returns to the point I made before about the old boy's Oxford Union style you know I think William Hague is classic Oxford Union in the way that he debates and he is
155 very good at it it would be churlish to deny that but I don't think that actually speaks in a language that connects to people out there in the country but he clearly does have a use of humour but you know some people are just naturally funny and good at it and that's something to cherish I think and actually some of the best humour is self-deprecating
160 humour and there are one or two people who are particularly good at that there is a little bit of a sort of pressure to include humour but I tend to think that it is best when it is natural John Smith used to be very good at working jokes into speeches I remember after the collapse of in 1992 when Britain was kicked out of the exchange rate mechanism and there'd been a hotel in
165 Scarborough that had fallen into the sea and he's had this wonderful speech about how everything was going wrong you know even hotels fall into the sea and somehow it worked it sounds really contrived now
Interview ends

Appendix Three: Description of the House of Commons Data Corpus

3.1. Description of full video data corpus of House of Commons speech events

Key: * = Debates used in the analysis of floor apportionment (Chapter Five)
 # = Prime Minister's Question Times and Departmental Question Times
 used in the analysis of the adversarial linguistic style (Chapter Six)

Date	Description	Duration in minutes
21/01/98	#Prime Minister's Question Time	30
02/04/98	Departmental Questions: Trade and Industry	60
02/04/98	Mo Mowlam: Statement on Northern Ireland	5
06/04/98	Departmental Questions: Defence	30
06/04/98	Questions to Leader of the House (Anne Taylor) on modernisation	30
06/04/98	Debate: Government Motion on Trade Union recognition	10
29/04/98	Departmental Questions: International Development	5
29/04/98	Prime Minister's Question Time	30
02/06/98	Departmental Questions: Health	10
04/06/98	Business of the House (Anne Taylor)	20
22/06/98	Questions to Leader of the House (Anne Taylor) on modernisation	30
22/06/98	Private Notice Question: Ian Paisley	10
22/06/98	Statement by Betty Boothroyd (Speaker)	5
22/06/98	Points of Order	5
22/06/98	Debate: Amendments to Crime and Disorder Bill: Clause 10	160
23/06/98	Departmental Questions: Scotland	30
01/07/98	Private Member's Debate: Gap Year Students (Nick St.Aubyn – Conservative).	95
01/07/98	Private Member's Debate: 50 th Anniversary of the NHS	90
01/07/98	Private Member's Bill: Pedlars (Peter Brand – LibDem)	30
01/07/98	Private Member's Bill: Reefs at Risk (Tam Dalyell)	30
01/07/98	Private Member's Bill: Oxted Hospital (Peter Ainsworth – Conservative).	30
01/07/98	Departmental Questions: International Development	30
01/07/98	#Prime Minister's Question Time	30
01/07/98	Private Notice Question: Archie Kirkwood (LibDem)	30
01/07/98	Ten Minute Rule Bill: Young People and Local Government - Ashak Kumar (Lab)	10
01/07/98	Finance Bill No.2. Amendments 48, 90, 15, 42. and Third Reading	270
01/07/98	Consideration of Lords' amendments to the Teaching and Higher Education Bill	200

03/07/98	Consideration of Lords' amendments to the Fireworks Bill	255
03/07/98	Adjournment Debate: North East London Probation Service	15
06/07/98	#Departmental Questions: Social Security	60
06/07/98	Statement by Harriet Harman on Child Support Agency followed by questions	60
06/07/98	*First Allotted Estimates Day Debate: Government's proposals for further education.	180
13/07/98	Opposition debate on Manufacturing and Industrial Relations.	130
15/07/98	Prime Minister's Question Time	30
21/10/98	#Prime Minister's Question Time	30
01/03/99	*Sexual Offences Bill Amendment 1: Age of Consent.	120
01/03/99	*Sexual Offences Bill Amendment 2: Position of Trust	120
02/03/99	#Departmental Questions: Health	60
02/03/99	Statement by Foreign Secretary Robin Cook	20
02/03/99	10 Minute Rule Bill: Teddy Taylor on execution of UK citizen in Calcutta	10
02/03/99	*Opposition Debate: Sierra Leone	180
02/03/99	Opposition Debate: Burden on Schools	80
03/03/99	Departmental Questions: Wales	30
03/03/99	#Prime Minister's Question Time	30
04/03/99	#Departmental Questions: Treasury	30
29/03/99	Prime Minister's Statement on Kosovo (+ questions)	30
29/03/99	New Writ (Southwark) - Fiona Jones sacking	45
29/03/99	*Government debate on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry	285
08/11/99	#Departmental Questions: Defence	30
12/04/00	Departmental Questions: Northern Ireland	30
12/04/00	Prime Minister's Question Time	30
03/04/00	Prime Minister's Question Time	30
10/05/00	Departmental Questions: Cabinet Office	30
10/05/00	#Prime Minister's Question Time	30
24/05/00	Prime Minister's Question Time	30
26/06/00	#Departmental Questions: Home	30
14/06/00	Departmental Questions: Cabinet Office	30
14/06/00	#Prime Minister's Question Time	30
10/01/01	Health and Social Care Bill (Second reading)	120
	Total:	3535 Hours:58.9

3.2. Table showing the total number of Prime Minister's Question Times; Departmental Question Times and other speech events (referred to as 'debates') and their duration in the full data corpus (see Chapter Five, section 5.4.3.)

Type of speech event	Number of events	Duration of all events (hours)
Debates	33	45.4
Prime Minister's Question Time	11	5.5
Departmental Question Time	15	8
Total events/duration in full corpus	59	58.9

Appendix 4: Description of the Scottish Parliament data corpus

4.1. Description of the full video data corpus of Scottish Parliament speech events

Key: * = Debates used in the analysis of floor apportionment (Chapter Eight, section 8.3.).

= First Minister's Question Times and Executive Question Times used in the analysis of the adversarial linguistic style (Chapter Eight, section 8.4.).

Date	Description	Duration (minutes)
30/11/00	#Questions: Scottish Executive	30
30/11/00	#First Minister's Questions	30
30/11/00	Economic Development: Debate.	90
07/12/00	#Questions: Scottish Executive	30
07/12/00	#First Minister's Questions	30
06/12/00	*Abolition of Poindings and Warrant Seals Debate	150
06/12/00	Glasgow Light Rail Scheme	5
14/12/00	*Debate: Opposition Motion on Transport	80
14/12/00	*Opposition Debate on Health Care	80
14/12/00	Ministerial Statement	15
14/12/00	#Questions: Scottish Executive	30
14/12/00	#First Minister's Questions	30
14/12/00	Debate: Committee re-structuring	90
	Total	690 (Hours:11.5)

4.2. Table showing the total number of First Minister's Question Times; Executive Question Times and other speech events (referred to as 'debates'); and their duration in the full data corpus (see Chapter Eight section 8.3.2.)

Type of speech event	Number of events	Duration of all events (hours)
Debates	7	8.5
First Minister's Question Time	3	1.5
Executive Question Time	3	1.5
Total events/duration in full corpus	13	11.5

Appendix 5: Records of interview requests

Date/Name	Type of contact	Response
B.Roche 01/03/1998	Letter to H of C	None
B.Roche 11/03/98	Phone: Spoke to Case worker Ali Meer.	No interviews or questionnaires allowed. Can gain tickets from office (0181 348 8668) but only for some debates. Put my name down for tickets for PM's Questions.
Angela Eagle 23/02/1998	Letter to H of C	None
Angela Eagle 24/10/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by e-mail 29/10/00
Caroline Flint 01/03/98	Letter to H of C	None
Ruth Kelly 01/03/98	Letter to H of C	None
Monica McWilliams (NI) 09/02/99	Letter to home address	Refused by letter
Anne Keen 05/03/99	Letter to H of C	Rang talked to assistant Ring back in April (after Easter). Rang back in April – too busy to give interview.
Dianne Abbot 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter
Katherine Adams 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	No reply
Janet Anderson 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	No reply
Hilary Armstrong 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter
Charlotte Atkins 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	No reply
Candice Atherton 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Responded to questions by letter. Further letter/request for clarification sent by me: 20/03/99 Received acknowledgement of letter 2 on 28/03/99. No further reply.
Betty Boothroyd 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter
Jackie Ballard 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Arranged interview for 13/04/99 4 p.m Central Lobby
Margaret Beckett 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter
Anonymous female labour backbench MP 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Arranged interview for 25/03/99

Martin Bell 07/03/1999	Letter to H of C	Spoke to ass. In Kosovo until after Easter. Ring again then.
Harriet Harman 24/10/00	Letter to H of C	Arranged interview for 10 a.m on 5 th December.
Helen Liddell 24/10/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter 6/11/00
Tessa Jowell 24/10/00	Letter to H of C	Arranged interview for March 20 th at 11 a.m. Assistant rang me to postpone interview. Rang three times to arrange another date but MP was too busy.
Kate Hoey 24/10/00	Letter to H of C	No reply
Angela Eagle 24/10/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by e-mail 29/10/00
Jane Griffiths 24/10/00	Letter to H of C	Arranged interview for 13/11/00
Charles Kennedy 02/11/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter 15/11/00
Clare Short 02/11/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter 7/11/00
A.Widdecombe 02/11/00	Letter to H of C	No reply
Christopher Leslie 02/11/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter 15/11/00
Douglas Alexander 02/11/00	Letter to H of C	No reply
Dawn Primarolo 02/11/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter 20/11/00
Phyllis Starkey 02/11/00	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter 09/11/00
Oona King 15/02/01	Letter to H of C	Arranged interview for 15/03/01. Waited for over an hour – MP did not show up. Rearranged interview for 21/03/01.
Dennis Skinner 15/02/01	Letter to H of C	Refused by letter 21/02/01
Steven Twigg 15/02/01	Letter to H of C	Arranged interview for 09/07/01
John Bercow 15/02/01	Letter to H of C	No reply
Teresa Gorman 15/02/01	Letter to H of C	No reply
Eric Forth 15/02/01	Letter to H of C	No reply
Edward Leigh 15/02/01	Letter to H of C	No reply

Part 2

1 tape recording

1 video

**We are unable to create a
digital copy**